Commentary

Volume Seventy-five, Number Three, March 1983

Why Strategic Superiority Matters
Robert Jastrow

Israel's New Majority
Daniel J. Elazar

The Gandhi Nobody Knows
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Babel the Jew
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Orwell in Perspective
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Books in Review:
Ruth R. Wisse/Michael Ledeen
David Singer/Eric M. Breindel
Kenneth S. Lynn

Christianity and the Holocaust: An Exchange
Hyam Maccoby & Critics

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—Charles L. Brown

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We're adapting our business to what the public expects.

I'd be less than truthful if I didn't say we have mixed feelings about breaking up a 100-year-old institution which has served the nation very well. On the other hand, we cannot live outside our times. And clearly, the times have changed. The American people really don't want monopoly, no matter how well regulated. They want competition and the choices that brings.

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Never underestimate the resourcefulness and dedication of telephone people to figure out how to reach a goal.

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ITURE, NOT DEMOLITION."

Chairman of the Board, AT&T

The task of divesting is vastly complicated. But we have the human talent. We have the engineering and scientific resources. And we have our pride.

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In considering the Consent Decree proposal, we thought long and hard about whether the new structure would imperil our ability to serve. And of course we never would have accepted any terms that automatically would have degraded the quality of service to the nation. The Decree gives us the opportunity to build even better communications services and systems because it removes the arbitrary constraints which have limited us in the applications of our technologies.

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This industry is where the opportunities and the excitement are.

If we have a truly competitive communications marketplace, with regulation only where it is needed, I believe AT&T and the divested telephone companies have a significant and constructive role to play in revitalizing the American economy and in maintaining and enhancing US technological leadership in communications.

The Bell System as we now know it will be no more. We will divest. But we are not demolishing the promise of tomorrow. That promise is alive and well. Bell System people are ready for new directions.

Bell System

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Commentary

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High blood pressure discriminates

By age. By sex. By race.
If you're interested in knowing whether or not you're in a group for which high blood pressure (hypertension) is more common—here is some helpful information.

Age discrimination
High blood pressure seems to prefer older people—half of Americans aged 65 and over have it. Yet, hypertension can occur at almost any age.

Sex discrimination
Under the age of 50, hypertension is more common in men than in women. After 55 or 60, it is more common in women than in men. But more men die from hypertension complications than do women.

Race discrimination
Statistics show that blacks, compared to whites, get high blood pressure earlier in life, at higher levels and twice as often.

Whites as well as blacks have high blood pressure, which may be associated with being overweight. (Your doctor would know if you are.) Hypertension runs in families and it's aggravated by consuming too much salt.

Why worry about high blood pressure?
Because in its early stages, high blood pressure is a disease without symptoms. More than 35 million Americans of both sexes and all ages and races have it—yet two out of six afflicted persons don't even know it.

Also, high blood pressure can shorten life. Uncontrolled, it can cause hardening of the arteries and it is the major cause of crippling through heart attacks, strokes and damage to the kidneys.

Yet, high blood pressure is one of the easiest conditions to diagnose and to treat.

How is high blood pressure diagnosed?
Hypertension cannot be diagnosed on the basis of one blood pressure reading alone. Only your doctor can accurately diagnose your condition.

What can be done about high blood pressure?
High blood pressure can be treated in several ways:

1. Healthier living through modifications in life-style: reduction of weight, salt intake, smoking, stress, anxieties and proper programs of exercise, rest and relaxation.
2. Blood pressure-controlling medicines. These have been among the miracles of modern therapeutics. A whole range of effective medicines can be prescribed by your doctor. The use of antihypertensive medicines, together with improved life-styles, has helped cut one type of stroke death in half and reduce heart attacks by one-third.
3. Watching out for other health conditions that may aggravate the effects of hypertension. For example, the risk of heart disease increases if both high blood pressure and high cholesterol are present. Your doctor can test your cholesterol level and interpret the results.

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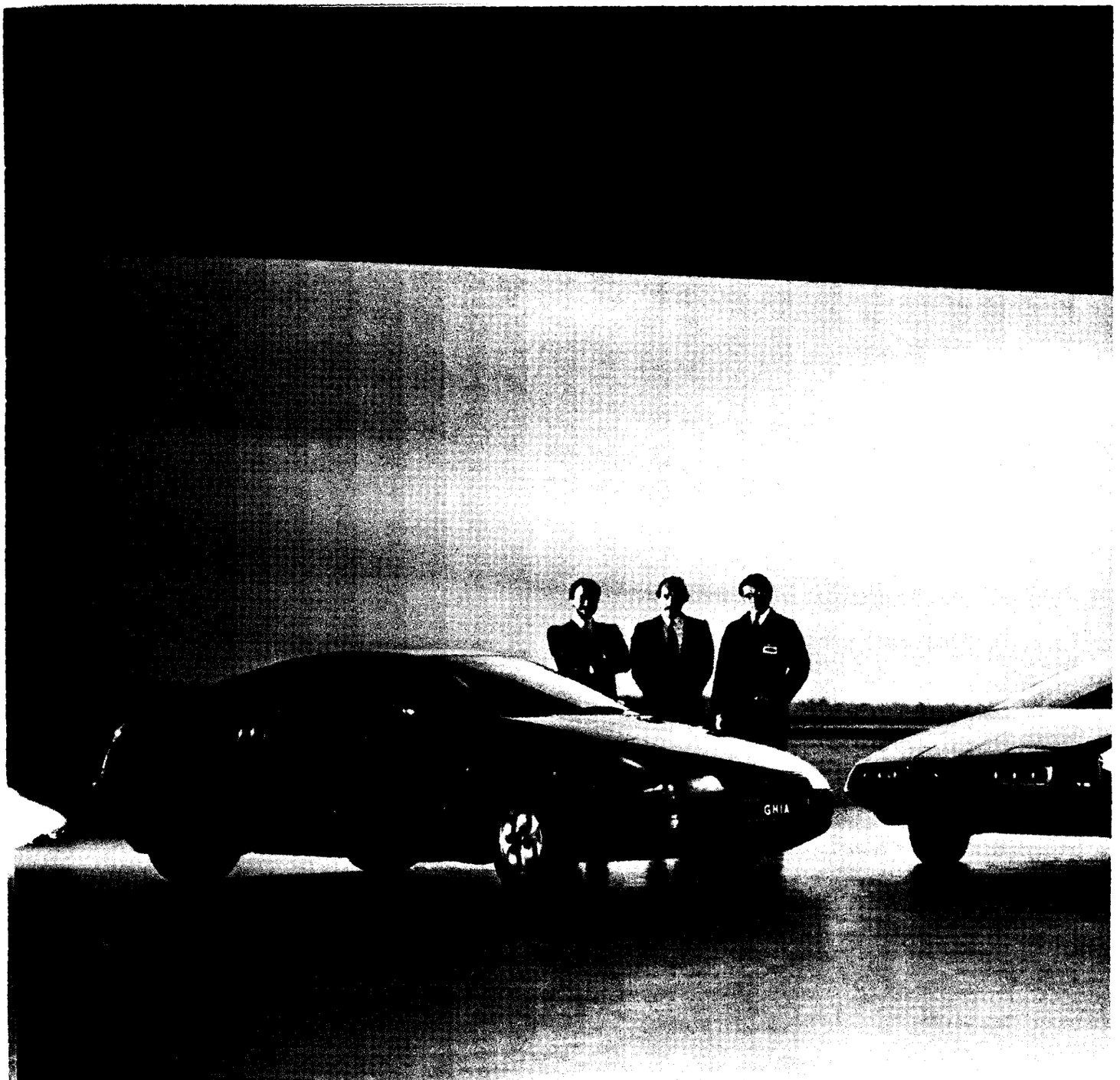

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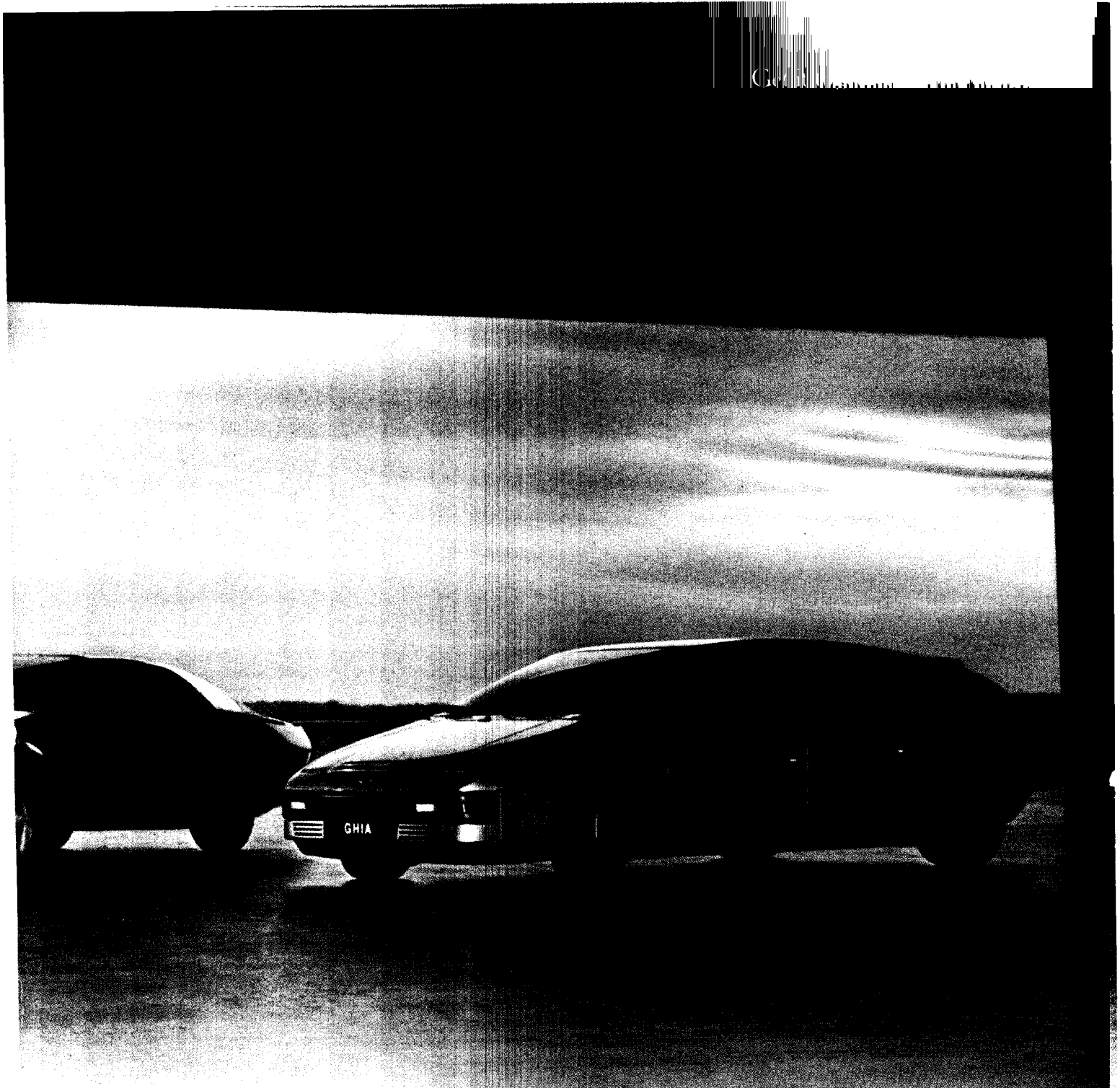

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Letters from Readers

Christianity and the Holocaust

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby's article, "Theologian of the Holocaust" [December 1982], while dealing less with Emil Fackenheim than with Mr. Maccoby's own theological theories, is nonetheless powerful and in some ways compelling. I would not wish to contest here Mr. Maccoby's assumption of Christian complicity in the Holocaust, having written on that subject elsewhere (e.g., "The Holocaust and Christian Responsibility," *America*, February 14, 1981), though I would argue for a more nuanced rendering of the historical sequence than Mr. Maccoby's broad strokes would seem to allow. The complicity of Christians and of certain strata of popular Christian teaching over the centuries, is, for me, a given that needs to be analyzed by Jews and Christians in dialogue rather than debated, especially regarding the central issue of the pernicious "deicide" charge. Mr. Maccoby's point concerning "the continuance into the post-Christian era of deeply-implanted fantasies about the Jews" is truly a crucial one for this effort.

But in some ways Mr. Maccoby's generalizations may do more harm than good to that urgently needed joint analysis. In the first place his understanding of the meaning of the crucifixion for Christians and of "the Christian doctrine of atonement" is inadequate from the point of view of Christian theology. Granted the equal misinterpretation of the doctrine by countless Christian preachers over the ages, the answer to his question, "If the Jews did not suffer, who would bear the guilt of the sacrifice of Jesus?," is a relatively easy one. The Catechism of the Council of Trent in the 16th century gave this quite traditional response:

> In this guilt are involved all those who fall frequently into sin; for, as *our* sins consigned Christ the Lord to the death of the cross, most certainly those who wallow in sin and iniquity crucify to themselves again the Son of God. . . . This guilt seems more enormous in us than in the Jews, since according to the testimony of the apostle [Paul], if they had known it they would never have crucified the Lord of glory; while we, on the contrary, professing to know him, yet denying him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on him (Hebrews 6:6; Corinthians 2:8).

The Second Vatican Council, in rejecting any sense of collective responsibility on the part of Jews for the death of Jesus (*Nostra Aetate*, no. 4), did so without any sense that it was thereby putting into jeopardy the Christian doctrine of atonement. Enough time has already passed, I would judge, to show to even the most skeptical that the Council fathers, not Mr. Maccoby, were right in their interpretation of Christian doctrine. Christ's passion is a mystery where meaning is only obscured, not enhanced, by focusing on the role of those few Jews who may have been involved historically. Mr. Maccoby's approach thus raises a nonexistent theological conundrum now long resolved.

Mr. Maccoby is also a bit loose with his historical examples. The blood-libel accusation, which he raises to show the "unbroken historical connection" between the Crusades and the Nazi death camps, was, in fact, vigorously and meticulously rejected for the nonsense it was by the Popes in every age in every period in which it gained popularity. The Chmielnicki massacres of the 17th century were not, as Mr. Maccoby states, "Polish massacres," but atrocities committed against Polish Catholics and Jews alike by rampaging Cossacks in revolt against Polish domination of the Ukraine. Likewise, I am struck by Mr. Maccoby's seemingly whimsical use of the term "Christendom." As a meaningful historic-geographic category, "Christendom" ended centuries ago. Even for the most conservative of Catholics its viability ceased with the demise of the Papal States. How Mr. Maccoby can see "Christendom" as a living entity today, in what he himself calls "the post-Christian era," is only one of a number of further questions I would put to him.

Since Mr. Maccoby chose to go so far beyond Emil Fackenheim and raise questions Fackenheim has not chosen to take up, I remain curious as to why he did not grapple with the many scholars who have already

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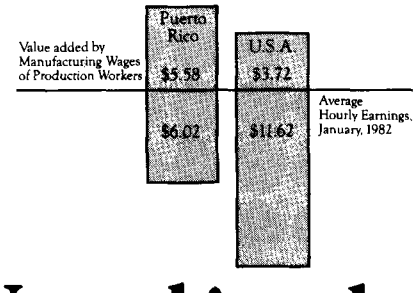

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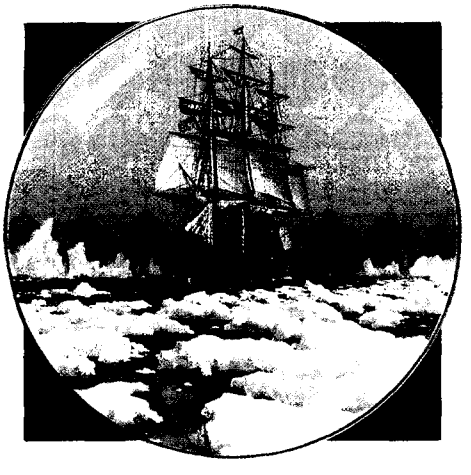

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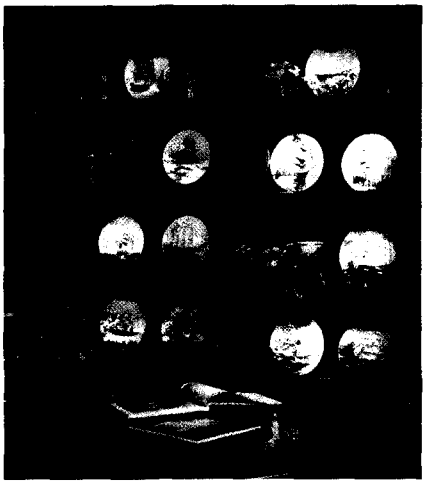

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discussed Mr. Maccoby's questions at some length, such as Yosef Yerushalmi, John Pawlikowski, Franklin Littell, A. Roy and Alice Eckardt, and the twelve Christian scholars who responded to Rosemary Ruether in Alan Davies's *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (Paulist, 1979).

All this being said, it should be acknowledged by all Christians that Mr. Maccoby's accusations against Christianity retain a certain moral edge. Wrong as he is about what Christianity authentically teaches, he is devastatingly accurate about what Christians popularly have taught and about the awesomely tragic consequences of that teaching for Jews. While Nazism was not a Christian sect (as Mr. Maccoby implies) but fundamentally anti-Christian, and while the Holocaust may not be a crisis for "Christendom" alone (as Evian proved), the Holocaust does remain a fundamental Christian problem. For, given where it took place, it could have been stopped by concerted Christian action—and wasn't.

EUGENE J. FISHER
Executive Secretary, Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We regret very much having read Hyam Maccoby's "Theologian of the Holocaust"; we were not aware that COMMENTARY was a medium for Jewish-Christian polemics.

Mr. Maccoby's entire thesis betrays not only an abysmal misunderstanding of Christianity but an emotional bias akin to that of which he finds all of Christianity guilty. Jewish demonology arising from rabbinical sources is no more pleasant than that from apostate Christian concepts. And both are the offspring of Abaddon.

HAROLD W. DART
Christians for Israel
Bellingham, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

COMMENTARY seems to have put its editorial responsibility aside by publishing Hyam Maccoby's "Theologian of the Holocaust." . . . What defining creed or published moral teaching of any historical church has ". . . taught over the centuries that it is weakness to be kind to Jews, and that it is virtuous to persecute them. . ."? What chapter and verse of the New Testament—the common source of Christian doctrine—proclaim such things? Of course one can find an aberrant bishop, divine, or even some group who advocate unholy practices, but no right-minded man can claim such things are representative over the centuries of the whole body of Christianity. And even had the practice been in fact as Mr. Maccoby describes it, his only conclusion could be that Christians deviate from their espoused doctrines. . . .

RICHARD J. CONNELL
College of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby has succinctly stated what I suspect many Jews believe but are either reluctant or afraid to express.

PAUL A. ABRAHAMSON
Randolph, Maine

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Hyam Maccoby's solution to the problem of anti-Semitism, which he regards as a Christian phenomenon, is that Christians must abandon their religious positions based on the crucifixion and the theology of the cross. These he calls the "myth" of Christianity. However, this is precisely what Jews and Christians have differed about as a matter of religious truth from the beginning . . .

Moreover, . . . Mr. Maccoby overlooks classical anti-Semitism . . . as exemplified in the writings of Cicero, Seneca, Ovid, and Tacitus. These intellectuals were fearful of the threat they felt Judaism posed to religious and national unity. This anti-Semitism was of such a nature that Salo W. Baron in his *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* found in ancient anti-Semitism almost every note sounded in medieval and modern anti-Semitism. . . .

The Holocaust is a more complex matter than Mr. Maccoby's black-and-white caricature allows. It is insufficient to say, as he does, that Nazism was post-Christian. Nazism was anti-Christian, utilizing 19th- and 20th-century intellectual departures from Christianity, including the latest concepts of social engineering and eugenics. Millions of Christians died along with Jews in the camps, many of whom were in the vanguard of opposition to the Nazis and all they stood for. While failures among Christians could be traced in many cases to anti-Semitic sentiments, this is not the whole picture. Much more powerful was the attitude of not wishing to get involved, apathy, avoiding moral issues, pleading ignorance, and refusing to think anything or anyone was worth sticking one's neck out for.

It is indeed unfortunate that Mr. Maccoby cannot see beyond his religious prejudices in his assessment of Fackenheim's work and of the Holocaust; his primary goal is to attack Christianity rather than to analyze history.

LEONARD F. VILLA
Yonkers, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby's article is an ill-tempered and graceless polemic riddled with error. If the Holocaust was indeed coextensive with Christendom, as Mr. Maccoby repeatedly reminds us, this is hardly sufficient proof that Christianity as such caused the Holocaust. The area that was once Christendom was also the most heavily populated by Jews, the most technologically advanced, and the most influenced by neo-paganism and scientism: two essential elements of Nazi race theory, as Léon Poliakov has demonstrated. Christians in Europe and America certainly did not react to the Nazi persecution of Jews with the uniform support or indifference that Mr. Maccoby suggests was present. Particularly in America and England, Catholic and Protestant clergymen denounced Nazi persecutions—incidentally, with far more enthusiasm and consistency than their modern counterparts now show in dealing with Communist atrocities against Christians. While many Ukrainian Orthodox peasants turned Jews in to the SS, Bulgarian Orthodox Christians, led by the Patriarch of Sofia, openly protected Bulgarian Jews against deportation. Although most (if not all) German Lutherans were insensitive to Jewish suffering, Danish and Norwegian Lutherans hid Jews from their persecutors. The Lithuanian and Polish Catholic record of saving Jews from the Holocaust was generally deplorable, outside the clergy; nonetheless, Italian Catholics and even many German Catholics did behave more courageously. Are we to infer from this that Christians who helped Jews were *ipso facto* less Christian? Or, perhaps, that Ukrainian Pentecostalists who aided Jews during World War II believed

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less in the crucifixion (the pernicious source for Mr. Maccoby of all Christian anti-Semitism) than Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox Christians, who were generally less sympathetic to Jews?

In his eagerness to inveigh against Christians and Christianity, Mr. Maccoby also ignores the enduring non-Christian sources of anti-Semitism. Ancient Roman statesmen, particularly Cicero, considered Jews culturally offensive and economically parasitic. Indeed, as the German Jewish scholar Guido Kisch has argued, pre-Christian attacks upon Jews were often passed on through the Christian era into the neo-pagan ideology of the Third Reich. The charge of deicide, to which Mr. Maccoby ascribes a perhaps exaggerated importance in Christian theology, was by the high Middle Ages only part of a vast network of negative associations surrounding European Jewry.

As for the tracing of Muslim and New Left anti-Semitism back to Christian sources, one must marvel at the ingenuity of Christianity-haters who often bear an ominous resemblance to Jew-baiters. Save for the Holocaust, which Mr. Maccoby does not prove was a Christian crime rather than an act in which nominal Christians participated, there is no humiliation that Christendom inflicted on the Jews that Muslim states have not duplicated or exceeded. The butchering of Baghdad Jewry (and of Assyrian Christians) by the Islamic government of post-World War I Iraq, and the oppression of ancient Jewish communities throughout the Arab world, indicate that Muslims can kill Jews quite brutally and efficiently even without the "crucifixion myth." The founder of Islam, unlike the founder of Christianity, was a persecutor of Jews. Arab nationalists and high Muslim religious officials, most notably the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, applauded Hitler's "final solution."

Finally, why blame Christianity for a New Left hostility vented by its bearers more often against Christians than Jews? The New Left rejects Judeo-Christian capitalist society in favor of Marxist socialism and countercultural morality. To the extent that Jews and Judaism have been involved (contrary to Jewish liberal wish fantasies) in the building of a hated Western civilization now under siege, New Leftists are understandably anti-Jewish as well as anti-Christian.

Mr. Maccoby's invective is not only factually dubious, as in its oversimplified account of the primitive Church's connection to Gnosticism, but also contains reckless advice. Is it really in our interest as Jews to try to lay yet one more "guilt trip" upon a Christian world now wallowing in guilt and self-doubt? Hasn't Mr. Maccoby noticed that the most philo-Semitic Christians today are also the most theologically confident and morally conservative? As Franz Rosenzweig properly recognized, Christians are the necessary allies of the Jewish people in sustaining the heritage of biblical spirituality. Of course neither Rosenzweig nor his followers (like Will Herberg and Jakob Petuchowski) have held to Mr. Maccoby's demonic and quite thoroughly Gnostic understanding of Christianity; nor for that matter to his strange view of the insignificance of humanism in talmudic Judaism.

Contrary to Mr. Maccoby's assertion, Emil Fackenheim does at least intermittently blame Christianity for the Holocaust. See especially his long comment published in the April 1975 issue of the *Journal of the History of Ideas.*

PAUL GOTTFRIED
Rockford College
Rockford, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby carries me a good distance with him, in part perhaps because of the powerful resonance which his argument stirs; but he does not carry me to his conclusions.

• He says too much. Having traced the antecedents of the Holocaust to Christianity's "central doctrine and myth," is it then possible to localize and reduce the problem to a "false turn," one which can be "analyzed and corrected"? (Incidentally, what sort of Christianity could emerge from such a correction; and where is the Christianity which would expose itself to that purgation?)

• He says too little. He apparently denies the role in the Holocaust of Nazism's non-Christian and un-Christian components. What of

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Nazism's racist compulsion, its repudiation of all previous law, its desire to legislate for the earth, to lead mankind into the future, to determine the route, to shape the rules, to affect and control all future history? . . .

To see the Holocaust as a problem and crisis for Christendom alone is to see very little.

MARC SALZBERGER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It has been pointed out many times . . . that when Christians massacred Muslims in Lebanese refugee camps it was hardly logical to blame it all on the Jews.

Yet Hyam Maccoby insists that the Holocaust was a direct, obvious, indeed virtually inevitable, consequence of specifically Christian animosity toward Jews. Surely he knows that the Nazi regime was ostentatiously pagan, anti-Christian; that the Nazis alleged racial rather than religious justification for their foul deeds; that they slaughtered millions of non-Jews too; and that had they won their war they intended to exterminate the Christian clergy and much of the (largely Catholic or Orthodox) Slavic population of Eastern Europe. That Mr. Maccoby *does* realize this is indicated, finally, by an offhand remark that undermines his case: "And a further factor . . . was the release afforded by Nazism from all vestiges of the restraint imposed by traditional Christian morality, which had hitherto acted as a counterweight to Christian mythology." One cannot have it both ways.

BERNARD NORLING
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby's grotesque exegesis of what Christianity "really" is, is regrettably similar to the paranoid conviction of the anti-Semite that the "real" character of the Jew is one of total amorality. . . .

Mr. Maccoby's explanation for the Holocaust is shockingly presumptuous because of his lack of understanding of Emil Fackenheim's view of the Holocaust as an "ineffable event." He argues that Fackenheim fails to place the Holocaust in its historical context. Having assumed a psychological explanation, he has reduced the origin of evil to an empirical level. Does he really believe that evil (or good) is explained by history or psychology? . . .

The central metaphor of Judeo-Christianity is in the biblical story of the fall, and any understanding of this is totally incompatible with Mr. Maccoby's assertion that "Judaism never regarded the world as evil, and thus never required a sacrificial savior to save mankind from crisis." The fall is the source of the knowledge of good and evil, and thus the source of suffering and mortality. Psychologically, it is the knowledge of good and evil which *created* man, for in the absence of such knowledge, we do not differ from animals. The "central metaphor" of Christianity is primarily concerned with salvation. To the extent that Jews are responsible for imposing morality on mankind, they are responsible for an ineradicable burden of guilt. It was this guilt which gave rise to the idea of salvation, and thereby created the very idea of a messiah! Salvation for the Jew turns on the exclusivity of being a Jew, together with the observance of religious ritual. When the followers of Christ, notably Paul, denied that salvation was the prerogative of Jews, they closed the door to the Jewish soteriology which turns on the concept of a chosen people.

It is surprising, then, that the Holocaust is not perceived as the consequence of the Jewish legacy of the moral imperative and internalized constraints. Having created the condition for everlasting suffering, the Jews denied the reality of the only salvation available to non-Jews, the affirmation of Christ as the Redeemer. Psychologically, the accusation leveled at Jews, that they are at heart devoid of scruples and unclean, reveals the nature of the burden imposed by Jewish religion: the necessity to be clean, and to have scruples.

The genocide of the Jews is seen, then, not as a "moral act" on the part of Christians, but as the denial of the *need* for morality and an attempt to destroy God, the source of moral constraints. This is quite explicit in the ravings of Rosenberg and Hitler, and perhaps it is implicit in the rise of Communism. Medieval Christian persecution of Jews is not in any way fundamentally different, although Christianity at that time felt a more compelling need for salvation than at present. . . .

These are the bare and oversimplified bones of those psychological and historical forces which determined the Holocaust. The limitation of such an explanation, apparently not perceived by Mr. Maccoby, is that if ethics is more than an empirical discovery of how things are in the world, then the possibility of evil no less than the possibility of good is a transcendent mystery, as ineffable as the persecution of Job.

HAL J. BREEN
Phoenix, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby's article on the origins of Christian anti-Semitism as related specifically to the Holocaust is the best essay I have ever read on the subject. His mythic analysis of the crucifixion, and the role of the Jews in Christian eyes as the representatives on earth of Satan, is undoubtedly correct, but he doesn't go deep enough. He has not found the bottom line. Mr. Maccoby nowhere explains why Christians feel so consumed by guilt and sin that the sacrifice of the scapegoat Jesus is necessary. Other peoples are apparently not so consumed. However, Mr. Maccoby does allude to the answer when he mentions the "condemnation of all mankind to hell by an angry Father-god." In order to understand this . . . it is necessary to interpret the myths in Freudian, specifically Oedipal, terms.

The origin of guilt is the conflict between the compulsive rage and hate we feel for the dominant father and our simultaneous desperate need for his love and approval. The Jewish method for dealing with this guilt over having "bad feelings" about the beloved father is to deny and suppress it. Indeed, the psychological driving force behind Judaism is loyalty to God, the almighty Father, Whom we create in the image of our bearded patriarch Abraham. The Christian method for dealing with this primordial guilt is to talk it to death, so that all are guilty, all are born in original sin, and thus no one is punished for "bad thoughts." The psychological driving force behind Christianity is the dissipation of guilt through confessions, penances, self-denials, etc. The central myth of Christianity is really a fairy tale: God sends Jesus, His only son, to earth to suffer as we suffer, to take the sin and guilt of the world on his own shoulders, and even to die in pain and torment. But then Jesus is resurrected from the dead. Resurrected to do what? Why, to sit at the right hand of the Father forever. It's the Hollywood ending that gives hope to a suffering humanity. In both Christianity and

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Judaism the bottom line is the attainment of the father's love.

However, there is a dark side to the Christian myth: the personification of the compulsive rage and hate felt toward the dominant father who cannot minister to every whim of the egocentric child. This is Satan, the dark father, feared and hated, but also an object of great fascination. The Christian sees himself as Jesus, suffering now but to be resurrected later (born again?) and the extinct Old Testament Jews, e.g., good father Abraham, as God the Father in heaven, but he attributes the persistent wickedness of the world to the continuing presence of the bad father Satan, i.e., the post-Jesus Jews.

In another form of the myth, the Jews are brother Joseph, possessor of the coat of many colors and beloved favorite son of the father, and therefore the object of brotherly envy. This provides a second reason for two millennia of murderous Christian attacks on the Jews: the one brother who will not join the conspiracy to overthrow the father, but who remains loyal, "chosen," and therefore hated. The Jew is the living symbol of stubborn loyalty to the father; living proof that mankind is not born in sin and guilt. Psychologically, the Jew is not in need of redemption, the Christian is.

It is because of the fundamental psychological nature of these myths that Mr. Maccoby's prescription of reeducation is woefully inadequate. . . .

ALEXANDER FIRESTONE
Ames, Iowa

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with great interest Hyam Maccoby's "Theologian of the Holocaust" and congratulate him for his courage and boldness of thought. Since he refers to an "irrational," "unconscious," and "psychological . . . need" for Christian demonology, I feel that a psychoanalytic perspective is germane.

The culmination of Freud's explorations of group psychology, *Moses and Monotheism*, could be published only after his flight from Nazi tyranny. In this great work the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is illuminated. Briefly, a myth more fundamental than even the crucifixion myth—the myth of Oedipus—is applied to an understanding of Christian anti-Semitism. . . .

The unconscious roots of anti-Semitism run as deep as patricide and the Christian solution provides a welcome relief from the burden of unconscious guilt. Thus I fear that a "program of reeducation" for Christians, which Mr. Maccoby advocates, is about as feasible as Jonathan Schell's recommendation for world government to prevent a nuclear holocaust.

SANDFORD HORODEZKY
Toronto, Ontario

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Having read and reread the many publications of Emil Fackenheim on the Holocaust, and having tried without success to resolve these thoughts with those of Rosemary Ruether, Yehuda Bauer, and others, it was like finding the light at the end of the tunnel to read Hyam Maccoby's "Theologian of the Holocaust."

Through a combination of study, logic, induction, and some intuition, I had some years ago reached the same conclusion as Mr. Maccoby; but to see it spelled out, in the erudite and convincing fashion of which he is so capable, leaves me anxious to pursue the further exposition of his thesis in his forthcoming book, *The Sacred Executioner*. . . .

THEODORE R. NELSON
Bay Harbor Islands, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hyam Maccoby makes a very convincing case for a specifically Christian religious hatred of Jews. Yet I believe two other factors to be of equal importance if the etiology of anti-Semitism is to be complete. They are: racial contempt (Aryan vs. Semitic), and the Jewish tendency not to fight even in self-defense, a tendency much in evidence since our Diaspora began.

It is well known that Conversos were denied ultimate acceptance into Aryan-Spanish families because the "blood purity" of those families had to be preserved. That Nazis would not accept converted Jews in any manner is too well known to require further elaboration.

Israel's military successes have profoundly altered the Gentile perception of Jews. This change has accomplished more than the National Conference of Christians and Jews and kindred organizations have ever succeeded in doing. Had there been anything like a self-defense organization even as late as the last century, the Eastern European pogroms might not have occurred, or, if they had, their severity would probably have been greatly abated. . . .

I hope that in formulating policies to make any further Holocausts impossible, my fellow Jews will stop blaming the Gentiles only and accept their own—albeit unintended—collaboration in this matter.

OSCAR WEIZNER
New York Philharmonic
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

From having belatedly discovered COMMENTARY two years ago, I have gained an increasing admiration for the magazine and its very insightful, thorough, and frequently brilliant stable of writers. . . . At the same time, as a conservative Christian, I wish it were possible for COMMENTARY to reflect the genuine accord that exists between, on the one side, ordinary American Christians who seem preternaturally immune to liberal illusions, and, on the other side, the state of Israel and the Jewish people.

Notwithstanding their mutual theological antagonism, these two groups have considerable emotional and historical ties. I am unable to match Hyam Maccoby's knowledge of religious history, but the historical errors of Christendom seem to me bizarre and stupid accidents. . . . Perhaps one should distinguish between a nominal Christendom and genuine Christianity.

Closer to home, I believe . . . the media invective directed against Jerry Falwell is more than a reflection of his alleged simplicity; it surely stems from some of the same roots as the abuse hurled at Israel and its leader after the invasion of Lebanon, so well described by Norman Podhoretz in "J'Accuse" [September 1982]. Generally speaking, these roots are the secularization of society and its inevitable concomitant: the profound, quasi-religious belief in egalitarianism as the mark of justice itself. As G.K. Chesterton said, "When men cease to believe in God, they don't believe in nothing—they believe in anything." "Anything," I submit, is a good description of egalitarianism and its results. . . .

It is time for Jews and Christians to recognize and articulate their common ground—while also admitting their differences—in the dangerous period ahead.

KENNETH ZARETZKE
Bothell, Washington

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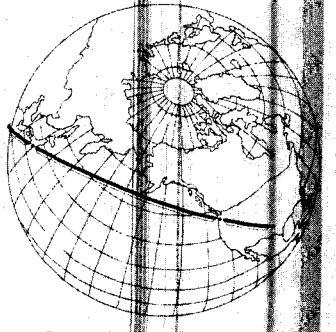

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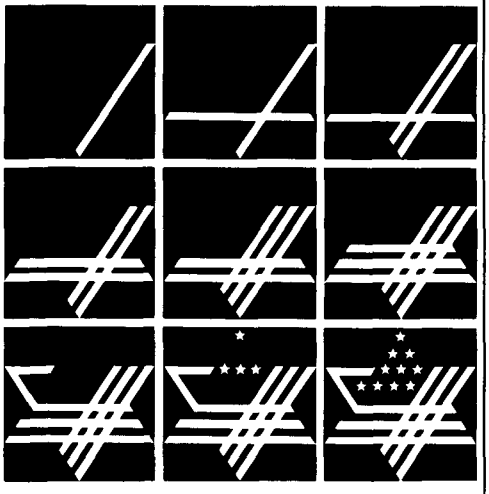

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HYAM MACCOBY writes:

A most significant letter is that of Eugene J. Fisher, whose attitude would be endorsed by many Christians who concern themselves with Jewish-Christian relations. Mr. Fisher regards demonization of the Jews as a widespread, "popular" interpretation of the Christian story, so powerful that it indeed produced the Holocaust. He denies, however, that it was ever asserted by people of authority, and he also claims that the "popular" interpretation is now dead; the issue has been "resolved" and I am doing Jewish-Christian relations no good by delving into the bad past.

I do not accept that I have described merely a "popular" interpretation. A large anthology could be compiled from the pronouncements of canonized saints of the Church alone, supporting the allegedly "popular" interpretation. Mr. Fisher too gives an idealized account of Papal attitudes to the blood-libel accusations. In the 19th century, for example, while the Pope was issuing denials of the truth of these accusations, the official Catholic journal *La Civilta Cattolica* was publishing a series of vile articles supporting their historicity. A word from the Pope could have stopped this. This is typical of Church behavior in such matters.

But even if Mr. Fisher were right about the "popular" interpretation, I would ask him to consider seriously whether all is well with a religion in which hatred of the Jews can be avoided only by an effort of reinterpretation that may well be beyond the grasp of children and simple people, on whom the mere graphic telling of the Gospel story has far more effect than any sophisticated interpretation of it. If, as Mr. Fisher argues, the point of the story is that we are *all* guilty, then Christianity has chosen the very worst way possible to inculcate this lesson. For the inevitable subliminal effect of a story with melodramatic, demonic villains, told to children, is not the internalization of evil but precisely the projection and externalization of evil that we find in the Passion Plays and in the "popular" response to the Gospels. In contrast to this, the Hebrew Bible is remarkable in that it contains no palpable villains, only fallible, understandable human beings. But the Hebrew Bible contains no devil either, nor the dualism that underlies the marking out of a people as representatives of cosmic evil.

Mr. Fisher also gives an idealized account of the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council. In the final, watered-down version, the sentence clearing the Jews of "deicide" was omitted. Jews were required to dissociate themselves from the "wicked generation" of the time of Jesus: i.e., the generation of Hillel, Shammai, and their pupils, one of the greatest periods of spirituality in religious history. This was no great step forward in Jewish-Christian relations.

I must stress, however, that I do not wish to minimize the efforts being made by Mr. Fisher and others to reverse the pattern of the past. I would only say that this cannot be done with the ease and smoothness that Mr. Fisher seems to envisage. The view that "we are all guilty" still requires the Jews to be symbols of unregenerate humanity, i.e., the yardstick of evil. Jews can hardly be expected to acquiesce in this unsavory role. Moreover, the examples of the enlightened approach since the Council of Trent all depend on the concept of *forgiveness of the Jews*. But to forgive is also to accuse.

At the same time, Mr. Fisher's attitude is on a different plane from that of Harold W. Dart and Richard J. Connell, who have not yet awakened to the facts of Christian responsibility for the Holocaust. I advise them to study the writings of Mr. Fisher himself, Rosemary Ruether, and other Christian writers of this courageous school; also Léon Poliakov's *History of Anti-Semitism*. As for their accusation that my article was a crude anti-Christian polemic, I should like to point out, in the friendliest spirit, that merely to defend Judaism from horrific charges made in the New Testament and later Christian literature cannot be done except by casting doubt on the truth of that literature. A man charged in court with murder should not be prevented from defending himself on the ground that this would be derogatory to his accusers.

Moreover, I do not regard myself as anti-Christian. As I understand it, a good Christian wishes to follow Jesus, and this means to find out what Jesus actually stood for and what he preached—not what later people thought he ought to have preached. This is where a deep study of the Jewish background of Jesus is so important for Jewish-Christian relations, because it would reveal that a claim to messiahship

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was not blasphemy, that the Phariseees did not forbid healing on the Sabbath, etc., etc. Jesus was a Jewish teacher, who regarded the Jewish Bible as the word of God, and the Jewish people as the recipients, through their prophets, of that word. To make the Jewish people instead into the exemplars of evil was certainly not in accordance with his thought. Any aspects of Christian teaching which reduce the Jews to contempt and persecution are surely an attack on the teaching of Jesus, and on Jesus himself.

What I have said (as Paul A. Abrahamson points out) is simply what many Jews think but have not dared to say: that the pogroms, expulsions, ritual-murder accusations, etc., culminating in the Holocaust, were caused by Christian teaching that made the Jews into sinister figures of evil, an accursed nation of deicides. This is the first generation for 1700 years (the period of Christian power) in which a Jew has been able to speak his mind about Christianity without fear of violence to himself, his family, and his fellow Jews. Yet this simple fact is swept out of consciousness by the modern liberal unspoken compact to forget history, to pretend that the present Jewish-Christian accord is somehow timeless and not a thing of today. This very silence endangers the accord that it is meant to protect, because it prevents us from inquiring into how we can prevent the past from recurring. Christians like Harold W. Dart support Israel and promote friendly relations with Jews, and this is an inestimable good, which I welcome and applaud; but the pretense that this is not a new attitude endangers the future.

Leonard F. Villa and Paul Gottfried point to the existence of pre-Christian anti-Semitism as disproof of Christian responsibility. Insofar as the Jews were regarded as representatives on earth of cosmic evil in certain varieties of pre-Christian Gnosticism (as shown by the Nag Hammadi library), this was indeed a precursor of Christian anti-Semitism. However, mere anti-Jewish feeling, which did not give the Jews a *cosmic* role of evil, as expressed by Apion, Cicero, Seneca, and Juvenal is no more than normal, if perhaps heightened, xenophobia.

Marc Salzberger and Bernard Norling point to the racialism and paganism of the Nazis as evidence that they were not influenced by Christianity. Nazi racialism has

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merely a pseudo-scientific veneer; the Nazis did not hate Semites but Jews (evidence of this is Hitler's effusive welcome to the Mufti of Jerusalem, a pure Semite). Nazi paganism and anti-Christianism were also a surface phenomenon. If they had *really* become pagan Nordics they would not have been anti-Jewish, since genuine Nordics had no such ideas. The Nazis were all brought up as Christians; the Nazis' anti-Semitism is continuous with the anti-Semitism of their Christian upbringing and uses the same vocabulary and images.

Bernard Norling thinks I have contradicted myself by saying that Christian morality acted as a restraint on Christian demonology. But the safeguard of the Jews was always the idea that a Christian should be kind *even* to the Jews. This was a precarious protection, for supererogatory virtue tends to break down in times of stress. To forgive the Jews, as Christ was represented as doing, was always liable to turn into "We have been forbearing to the Jews, but *this* is too much." The Nazis, however, did not even have this precarious restraint. It should also be mentioned that there have been, at all times, Christians who were far better than their theory; simple human decency kept breaking through the dictates of dogma. This was what infuriated St. John Chrysostom. His vicious diatribes against the Jews were provoked by the fact that in his time (4th century C.E.) many ordinary Christians still preserved friendly relations with Jews.

Paul Gottfried shows an inability to see things in proportion. He believes that because *some* Christians helped Jews during the Holocaust the overall picture of apathy or active cooperation can be ignored. Muslims persecuted Jews at times; therefore, he thinks, the incomparably higher level of Christian persecution has no significance. If he will reread my article, he will find that I have dealt with his other points. His idea that I have a view of "the insignificance of humanism in talmudic Judaism" is astonishing, in light of my published writings.

Hal J. Breen has the hoary and unhelpful idea (advocated recently by George Steiner) that anti-Semitism arises from resentment against the demands of Jewish morality, but he combines this with a view about Jewish "exclusivity." Judaism is a universal religion, though not a universal church; it envisages a plurality of monotheistic communions. Mr. Breen should investigate the concept of the Noahide Laws, and attend to the universalism of the books of Ruth, Job, and Jonah.

Alexander Firestone and Sandford Horodezky make a valid point about the depth-psychological aspect of anti-Semitism. However, we must start somewhere; and Freud himself stressed the importance of work on the ego-level as an integral component of analysis, especially at the beginning.

Finally, we come to the great question (raised by Leonard F. Villa and Marc Salzberger) of what path Christianity is to follow if its central myth is shown to be productive of evil. This is a question to which I have given much thought, but it is too large to be treated

a·poc·a·lyp·tic *adj.* **1:** foreboding imminent disaster or final doom

prem·ise *n.* **1a:** a proposition supposed as a basis of argument **b:** something assumed

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here. I can only say that *this* is the question to which Jewish-Christian dialogue should be chiefly directed. In my view, the recovery of the historical Jewish Jesus is essential to this inquiry, as is the all-important distinction between the Synoptic Gospels, which present, on the whole, an authentic picture of Jesus, and the Gospel of John, which has distorted that picture. Judaism has always had a pluralistic religious outlook, so there is no question of wishing to convert Christians to Judaism; yet the evil turn by which a gulf opened between Jews and Christians must be reversed if the true distinctiveness of Christianity is to emerge.

On the general question of Jewish-Christian reconciliation, we can derive some guidance from the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph was able to forgive his violent brothers by giving them the opportunity to redeem themselves by their behavior to Benjamin, also a favorite son and a source of sibling rivalry. The Jews have set up a Benjamin, the state of Israel; and the friendly attitude shown by many Christians to Israel has done much to convince Jews of Christian repentance for evil done. Jews, I must stress, are as desirous as Joseph for such reconciliation; they long to be able to say to Christians, "I am Joseph your brother." But they do not want to be exemplars of evil, however symbolic, nor to be "forgiven" for things they did not do.

China

To the Editor of Commentary:

As a BIC (Born in China), I read with great interest the perceptive and informative piece by Leopold Tyrmand, "The Mandarin and the Commissar" [November 1982]. Having recently returned from a seven-week trip to China after an absence of some thirty years, I am in agreement with most of Mr. Tyrmand's observations and analysis.

One important point, however, seems to require further elucidation. To the best of my knowledge, friendship has a somewhat different meaning for the Chinese from what it usually means for us in the West. The Chinese concept of friendship has withstood both heavy-handed and dogmatic Communism and the disastrous Cultural Revolution. It is deeply rooted in the Chinese character and is roughly equivalent to sacrificing for the benefit and pleasure of your friend without any obligation or even anticipation of reciprocation. It is not too uncommon for Chinese to sacrifice their lives for the sake of friendship.

I also disagree that only Americans can give the Chinese "the expertise to make their society work." This can be easily obtained from Japan, which explains the multitudes of Japanese technocrats visiting China at present. (Many of them are too noisy and boorish for the more cultured and refined Chinese.) Indeed, Americans can offer the Chinese sincerity and ideas, but it is friendship that the Chinese are seeking, and I don't think it should be denied them out of hand. This denial could set back the first steps toward freedom and democracy which are now being undertaken....

Samuel Kotz
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

Job 5:7

To the Editor of Commentary:

Praising the third (and final) volume of the new Jewish Publication Society version of the Hebrew Scriptures for doing well "to stick to the traditional rendering" is one thing, but taking as an example a verse which is as controversial as Job 5:7 and not quoting it in the JPS version are serious slips ["How to Read the Bible," by Chaim Raphael, December 1982]. Mr. Raphael's quotation, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward," is taken from the Interpreter's Bible. In the new JPS version we read: "Man is born to [do] mischief, just as sparks fly upward."

Now let us look at tradition. Martin Luther renders the second half of the verse as "as the birds soar upward." Moses Mendelssohn follows and the Septuagint precedes him in saying birds and not sparks. English and German tradition apparently parted ways centuries ago. Why the confusion? The reason is that no one really knew what the Bible meant by *"vnei reshef"* because the word *reshef* occurs nowhere else. By changing the order of consonants, translators linked the word to *saraf* ("burning"), rendering the phrase literally as "sons of the flame." In the Septuagint and, on the basis of its authority, in some later versions the phrase was rendered as "young birds" or just birds and even vultures, but in the King James Version (KJV) it became "sparks."

These far-fetched interpretations

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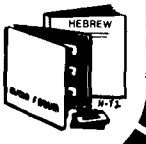

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cannot stand up against the idea of Gerald Abrahams, a British contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972), who reads *reshef* as *refesh*, as in Isaiah 57:20. True, *refesh* also occurs only once, in this verse, but it is linked to another word meaning approximately the same which occurs three times. All translators, moreover, agree on the meaning of these two words. The KJV says "mire and dirt" and the new JPS version renders the whole verse: "The wicked are like the troubled sea . . . whose waters toss up mire and mud." Now, which are the "sons," i.e., the offspring? Abrahams says it is the scum that rises to the top! The parallel between Isaiah and Job is striking: man (Adam), born to sin, muddying the waters—a thought reflecting Job's plight much better than a simile invoking sparks or birds.

Changes of the order of consonants are not infrequent in the Bible. Perhaps the best known examples are *kesev* which occurs nine times, and *keves*, occurring only twice, both meaning sheep. What makes better sense should always take precedence over what tradition makes of the text of the Scriptures.

LUDWIG SELIGSBERGER
Newton, Massachusetts

CHAIM RAPHAEL writes:

Ludwig Seligsberger reproves me for not adopting a proposal of the late Gerald Abrahams for a bold translation of Job 5:7 that "makes better sense" than the traditional "as the sparks fly upward." I was at college with Mr. Abrahams and knew then, and always afterward, that he loved to come out, *pour épater les savants*, with delightfully far-fetched ideas, as in this instance, in which he suggests, apparently, that we should abandon *reshef*, a word which occurs many times in the Bible, and rearrange the letters to yield *refesh*, which occurs only once, and in a wholly different context.

We can all agree that the phrase *u'vnei reshef yagbihu uf* is mysterious and rather hard to connect with the preceding "man is born unto trouble." After looking at many translations, I decided that the traditional translation (adopted in the new JPS version: "just as sparks fly upward") could at least be *interpreted* as linked with the preceding phrase, whereas the Anchor Bible's version: "and Reshef's sons wing high" demands a commentary, though it ends up with the same

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intent, a point I should like to explain.

The word *reshef* has two interconnected meanings. First, it is the name of a Canaanite god of the underworld and pestilence, portrayed in Ugaritic and other inscriptions as "Reshef lord of the arrow," and "Reshef of the birds," both indicating how swift he is in operation. He is not mentioned in the Bible directly as a god, but where the word occurs (always in poetry) it indicates flame, or arrow, or pestilence. In the sense of "flame," Reshef's sons could mean "sparks." The same sense of swiftness and flight upward might yield "birds," which would also fit in with Reshef's delineation as a god. In a pleasantly long-winded note, the editor of the Anchor Bible says that his translation leaves it open whether the passage "is a poetic image for flames or sparks, or a more direct allusion to the god of pestilence," and that either is appropriate to the context; for in both cases we are offered a parallel to man being born for trouble. Question marks still hover in the air; and how pleasant it would have been to hear Gerald Abrahams arguing it all fiercely, drawing on his impish mother-wit to lighten the matter-of-factness of pedants like me.

Martin

To the Editor of Commentary:

Joseph Epstein's remembrance ["My Friend Martin," December 1982] is one of the most touching and human pieces that I have ever read. In describing his friend's traits with warmth and understanding, appreciating both his distinctive qualities and his shortcomings, Mr. Epstein has presented a rounded portrait of Everyman—and literary style at its very best.

Suzanne H. Cohan
Worcester, Massachusetts

To the Editor of Commentary:

I read Joseph Epstein's "My Friend Martin" and was moved by it. It is written with tenderness and yet a sense of foreboding. It evokes the ghosts of our own Martins. . . .

"The kindness shown to the dead is true kindness because one cannot hope for a reward"—Rashi.

Sinclair Kossoff
Chicago, Illinois

"The Rebbetzin"

To the Editor of Commentary:

Thank you for bringing to your readers Chaim Grade's "The Rebbetzin" [October 1982]. It made for delightful reading. Congratulations!

Miriam Bensman
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Garp's World

To the Editor of Commentary:

I appreciated Richard Grenier's review of *The World According to Garp* ["Garp: Violence for the Educated," September 1982]. I tried to read this much-recommended book but put it down in discomfort after reading only part of it. Although I am a psychologist who is psychoanalytically trained, I really could not explain why I was made uncomfortable by the book (though I didn't try too hard to do so). Mr. Grenier's analysis is convincing. I could never abide sick jokes, or scatological jokes, or anything that laughs at human pain or injury. My thanks to Mr. Grenier for illuminating an important topic.

Ephraim Friend
Flushing, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

After John Irving had been lionized by literary critics as our own Charles Dickens, and adopted by the women's movement as an honorary feminist, I had assumed the world had finally gone completely mad. Then I read Richard Grenier's excellent article and my faith in humanity was restored.

I was repulsed by Irving's book. The reader is never allowed to believe in the characters or their actions. Instead, Irving keeps zapping us with bizarre happenings that never allow us to get our bearings. It is an attempt at black comedy, pitched too high for human ears. Like many hack writers, Irving starts with sick punchlines and builds his jokes around them. He resembles a sleazy horror-movie director who believes the more excess there is, the better the work. It is an infantile brand of nihilism that cheapens all emotion.

The movie has been adapted by an innocuous writer, known for trivializing serious subjects (the 60's and the 70's, etc.), stars a "nice" TV actor, and features cute music, but it cannot conceal Irving's ugly view of life. This is a film that claims to be an ode to life, yet it is filled with acts of senseless mayhem. It is also supposed to be a classic of women's liberation, but Irving . . . has created women characters whose actions cause mutilation, disfigurement, and death. If John Irving isn't a first-class misanthrope, I don't know who is.

Dan O'Neill
Los Angeles, California

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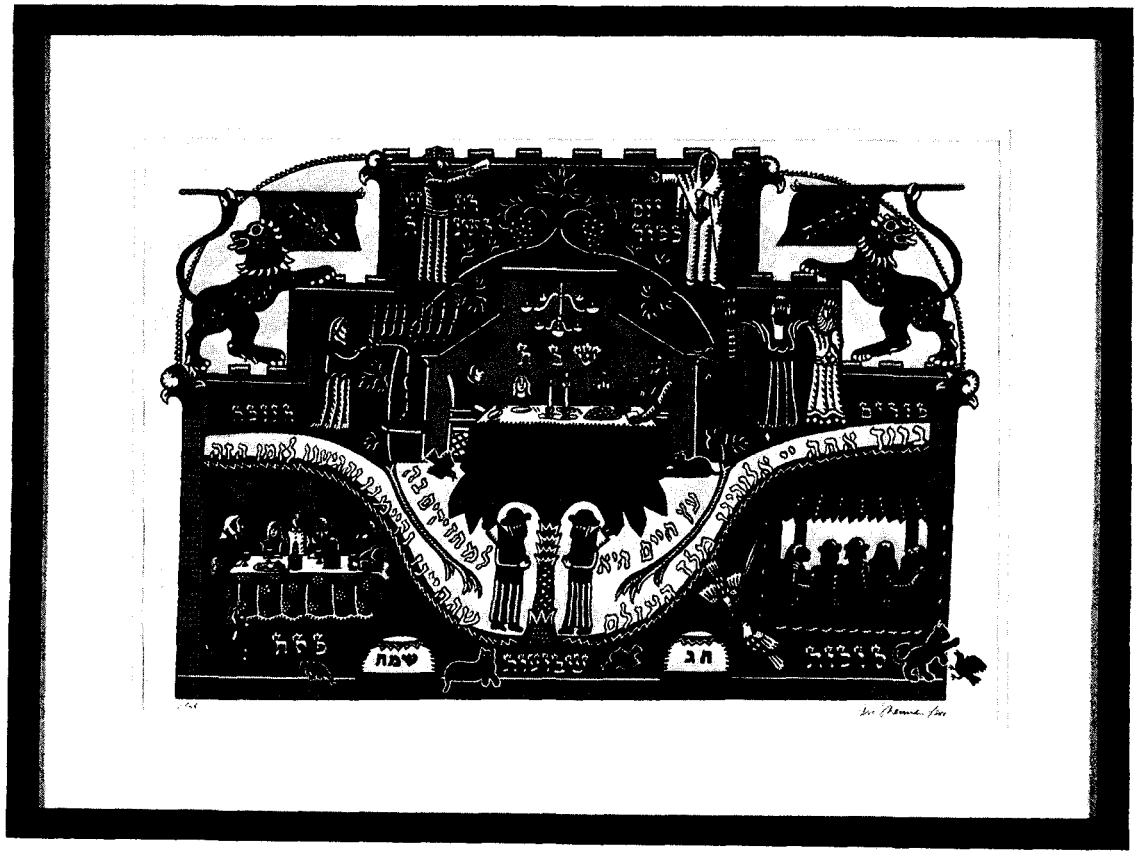

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by

Ori Sherman

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Why Strategic Superiority Matters

Robert Jastrow

When I was a young physicist I spent a year working on nuclear-physics problems with Robert Oppenheimer at Princeton. I then went out to the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Berkeley, where I shared an apartment for a time with Harold Brown, who later became Secretary of Defense in the Carter administration. My friendship with Dr. Brown brought me into contact with Herbert York and the weapons physicists in Berkeley, and that led to a job on the Greenhouse project.

The Greenhouse experiment, which took place in 1951 on Eniwetok atoll in the Pacific, was supposed to create the first man-made thermonuclear reaction, using the energy of a 500-kiloton atomic bomb to ignite a fraction of an ounce of deuterium and tritium placed in a small adjoining chamber. The project was more of a public-relations stunt than a genuine experiment, because everyone knew beforehand that it was pretty certain to work; using a huge atomic bomb to ignite the little vial of deuterium and tritium was like using a blast furnace to light a match. According to my understanding at the time, Edward Teller was trying to get support for the H-bomb project, and since he could not figure out how to build an H-bomb, he thought up the Greenhouse project instead, as a demonstration piece for the people back in Washington.

In any case, my job on Greenhouse was to calculate the temperature of the reacting mixture of deuterium and tritium. As I recall, it was supposed to hit a million degrees or so, which is beyond the range of an ordinary thermometer. As the house theorist, I applied the methods of the branch of physics known as radiative transfer theory to compute the temperature inside the vessel of deuterium and tritium, using measurements on the amount of radiation coming from the outside. It was the kind of calculation astronomers do routinely for the hot gases in stars, and later on I was to do it quite often in NASA, as a part of my work in astrophysics and planetary science.

Robert Jastrow was the founder of NASA's Institute for Space Studies and served as its director until his retirement in 1981. He is now professor of earth sciences at Dartmouth. His most recent book is *The Enchanted Loom: Mind in the Universe.*

The Greenhouse assignment led to a trip to the Pacific and a close look at a 500-kiloton atomic explosion. I also had a chance to work with some very bright people, such as Drs. Teller, York, and Brown, and later on, at Los Alamos, with Stanley Ulam, George Gamow, and others. And, of course, there was a great deal of government and Atomic Energy Commission politics swirling around the figures of Oppenheimer, Teller, and Lawrence, of which I had an intimate and revealing worm's-eye view. But that is another story.

I left nuclear research in 1958 when I joined NASA. I did not think much about it, or about nuclear bombs, for the next twenty years until, three years ago, I happened to come across a *New Yorker* article on nuclear weapons and SALT by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (November 19, 1979). In reading Senator Moynihan's article, I became aware for the first time that the policies of the United States for protecting its citizens from destruction are based on a flawed premise.

The premise is that the Soviet Union will be deterred from a surprise nuclear attack on the United States by the knowledge that such an attack would trigger a devastating American counterattack. And, of course, *we* are deterred from an attack on the USSR by the knowledge that the Soviets maintain a similar arsenal. The result is a nuclear standoff, and world peace.

In other words, each side holds the other side's civilian population as hostages. Holding hostages, and threatening their massacre, are time-honored methods for achieving one's objectives in war, but they have never been suggested before as a means of keeping the peace. The proposal for mass exchange of hostages is a simple but brilliant strategy conceived by American intellectuals who were trying to figure out a solution to a terrible problem: how does the U.S. protect itself from nuclear destruction in an age in which missiles vault the oceans and the concept of Fortress America no longer has meaning?

The academicians who thought up this idea called it Mutual Assured Destruction, or sometimes simply MAD. It makes very good sense, as you would expect, since the policy was formulated by some of the most brilliant scientists and academicians who have ever served in an advisory

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capacity to our government. The trouble is that MAD is a theory, and like all theories, it depends on an assumption. This assumption has turned out to be false.

The assumption behind the theory of Mutual Assured Destruction is that both the United States and the USSR will freely offer up their populations for massacre. But this requires that each country give up all attempts to defend its own people. In other words, the two countries must agree that neither will have a civil-defense program, and neither side will try to shoot down the other side's missiles.

On the face of it, this proposal sounds peculiar. What does it mean, as Senator Moynihan wrote, to say "we must not defend ourselves because if we do the enemy will attack"? As a physicist once remarked of Einstein's theory of relativity, when you first hear this line of reasoning you think you must have misunderstood it, and when you understand it you think you must have misheard it.

Actually, MAD is a logical response to the problem of nuclear war, and it could have worked, *if* the Russians had been reasonable and seen matters our way—if they had been willing to offer up their people as hostages, just as we have done. But the Soviet Union saw things differently.

It is now clear—in fact it has been clear for a decade—that while for many years the American government adopted the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction proposed by our scientists and academicians, the Soviet government rejected it. The USSR undertook to do exactly what our strategists say it is supposed not to do: it implemented large programs for defending its citizens from nuclear attack, for shooting down American missiles, and for fighting and winning a nuclear war. The result, as Senator Moynihan has said, is "a policy in ruins," and the greatest peril our nation has faced in its 200-year history.

WHY did the Russians reject the American plan for avoiding nuclear war? Perhaps the reason is that the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction is very logical, and therefore appealing to a scientist; it is what a physicist might call a "sweet" solution to a difficult problem. Now scientists have an important voice in formulating American defense policy; after all, a physicist became Secretary of Defense in the Carter administration. But in the Soviet Union scientists carry little or no weight in defense matters. Andrei Sakharov—the great colossus of Soviet atomic weaponry, with the stature of Oppenheimer and Teller rolled up in one—tells the story of a banquet attended by Soviet generals and scientists following the first test of a Russian H-bomb in 1955. Sakharov, who had designed the bomb and was responsible for its success, toasted the achievement with a wish that the Russian bomb would never be exploded over cities. The general in charge of the tests replied to the effect that the job of a scientist was to make the bombs, and how they were used was none of his business.

In any case, the Russians have made it clear that they think the theories of the American scientist-advisers are crazy, and they want no part of them. Their rejection goes beyond the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction itself; they reject the view, so widely held in America, that the mass detonation of nuclear weapons would mean the end of civilization, and, therefore, that these weapons are not useful tools of military policy.

At one time, Soviet thinking on nuclear war did echo American ideas on the impossibility of a nuclear victory. That was in the 1950's, soon after Stalin's death, when Malenkov, who was then the Soviet premier, announced that nuclear war could lead to the "destruction of world civilization." But Malenkov was severely criticized by Khrushchev, who said he had it wrong; only capitalism would perish in a nuclear war. By the mid-1960's the debate was over, and the elements of Soviet nuclear policy were set in concrete. In 1979, Secretary of Defense Brown confirmed that since 1963, "The Soviets have had a policy of building forces for a preemptive attack on United States ICBM's."

And in fact Soviet military writings make it plain that the entire war-fighting posture of the Soviet General Staff rests on the mass use of nuclear missiles:

> The most important task of the General Staff in preparing for a modern war is the detailed planning of employment of nuclear weapons by all services of the armed forces.*

> The armed forces of the Soviet Union . . . must be prepared above all to wage war under conditions of the mass use of nuclear weapons.†

> The basic method of waging war will be massed nuclear rocket attack. . . .**

> Nuclear missile strikes . . . and the ability to use them before the opponent does, are the key to victory.††

> It is recommended that the nuclear strike be launched . . . unexpectedly for the enemy. Preemption in launching a nuclear strike is ex-

* *Voyennaya mysl'* ("Military Thought"), October 1964, p. 23; quoted in *Soviet Strategy for Nuclear War*, edited by J.D. Douglass, Jr. and A.M. Hoeber (Hoover Institution Press, 1979). According to Douglass and Hoeber, *Voyennaya mysl'* is a confidential journal designed for internal use by the Soviet General Staff and officers of the Soviet armed forces.

† V.D. Sokolovskiy, *Voyennaya strategiys* ("Military Strategy"), p. 193, edited by H.F. Scott (Crane, Russak, 1975).

** *Ibid.*, p. 210.

†† Byely *et al.*, *Marxism-Leninism on War and Army (A Soviet View)*, trans. U.S. Air Force, Soviet Military Thought Series No. 2 (Government Printing Office), p. 217; quoted in Douglass and Hoeber, p. 38.

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pected to be the decisive condition for the attainment of superiority.*

SOME American scientists and arms-control experts find it hard to believe that the Russians can actually hold these views on the massive use of nuclear weapons. They feel that if the Russian generals think they can fight and win a nuclear war, the reason must be that the generals have not thought the question through carefully. "I don't think we should substitute their judgment for our common sense," said Paul Warnke about the matter. Warnke, who was President Carter's chief arms-control negotiator, thought Russian thinking about emerging victorious from a nuclear war was "primitive," and the United States "ought to educate them into the real world of strategic nuclear weapons."

But the Russians have refused to be educated. Around 1963, in pursuit of their objective of winning a nuclear war if it should break out, they began a massive program for building nuclear bombs, missiles, and submarines. In the next few years, American satellites photographed new missile silos sprouting all over the Soviet Union. In 1967, the Russians built 160 new silos; in 1968, they added 340 more; in 1969, they drew abreast of the United States. By then each side had about 1,000 silos and a like number of missiles.

None of this bothered American strategists because their policy of Mutual Assured Destruction required that each country must have enough nuclear destructive power to kill a lot of the other fellows. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had figured out that we had enough bombs to kill at least 50 million Russians directly in a mass nuclear attack, in addition to millions who would die later from radiation poisoning. He stated that he thought this was sufficient to deter the Russians from starting anything. Therefore, in 1967, he froze the United States force of ICBM's at 1,000 Minutemen plus 54 of the older Titans. He also froze the number of missiles carried by our nuclear submarines at 656. Secretary McNamara had said a few years earlier: "There is no indication that the Soviets are seeking to develop a strategic nuclear force as large as our own." The Secretary was relaxed about the Soviet build-up; his feeling was that if the Soviets improved their capabilities for blowing us up, they could be more equal partners in the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction, and the peace of the world would be more secure.

So, while the Russians were working away at increasing the size of their nuclear arsenal, the United States made no attempt to stay ahead of them, and the number of American missiles and nuclear submarines remained fixed at their 1967 levels. Meanwhile the Soviet military budget continued to climb. It went up steadily, 4 percent a year, year after year. At the same time, the American defense budget, exclusive of Vietnam, began to decline. In 1970, the two budgets crossed—one going up, and the other going down. Still the Soviet budget continued to increase, especially in the area of strategic forces—nuclear bombs, missiles, and submarines—where the Soviets spent about $40 billion a year, while American expenditures in this critical area of defense averaged about $12 billion a year.

By 1969 or 1970, the effects of the massive Soviet build-up were becoming apparent. In round numbers, the Soviet Union now had 1,400 ICBM's plus another 300 nuclear missiles in submarines. Meanwhile, the U.S. strategic forces remained frozen at their 1967 levels of 1,054 ICBM's and 656 nuclear-submarine missiles. Soviet superiority in ICBM's was roughly balanced by our edge in submarine-launched missiles. (We still had a fleet of aging B-52 bombers, but their usefulness against the massive Soviet air defenses was open to question.) Overall the Russians were about equal to us in nuclear destructive power.

Now both sides met the requirements for Mutual Assured Destruction. Each possessed enough weapons to inflict serious damage on the other fellow, and to American strategists, any further build-up by either nation would have been pointless. All that remained was to sit down with the Russians and formalize the arrangement with an arms-control treaty. SALT—the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks—was the result.

SALT, ratified in 1972, did not actually limit the number of nuclear bombs in the American and Russian arsenals. What it limited was objects that carry bombs, such as missile silos and nuclear submarines. A missile silo, as Senator Moynihan has pointed out, is a hole in the ground, and it can hurt you if you fall into it, but otherwise it is harmless. A true arms-control treaty should have limited the number and size of the nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the two countries. But the United States was never able to get the Soviet Union to agree to anything like that; the Russians would only accept a limit on items such as the number of holes in the ground.

Even so, the Russians found it difficult to live by the terms of the treaty after they signed it. Some years ago, for example, our satellites caught them in the act of digging 150 extra missile silos that were not permitted by the SALT treaty. When the United States brought this matter to the attention of the Russians, they explained that the new holes were launch-control silos, intended to house the crews and equipment which launched the missiles.

* A.A. Sidorenko, *The Offensive (A Soviet View)* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1970), trans. U.S. Air Force, Soviet Military Thought Series (Government Printing Office, 1974), p. 115; quoted in *The Future of Soviet Military Power*, edited by L.L. Whetten (Crane, Russak, 1976).

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But the extra silos had special doors of the kind that pop open to permit a missile's quick escape. A silo with a pop-up door is essential for launching missiles, but highly undesirable for housing the launch-control crew, which usually is housed in an underground bunker to protect it from radiation and other effects of nuclear attack. Whatever use the additional silos might be put to initially, it was obvious that they were meant to be convertible to missile silos at a moment's notice.

Specialists monitoring Soviet compliance with the SALT treaty have reported many other violations. Some are ominous because they indicate a serious intent to deceive the United States. For example, former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird reported in 1977 that the Soviets had gone to great lengths to conceal from our satellite cameras their operations with the SS-16, a new Soviet ICBM.

Unlike our strategic missiles, the SS-16 is mobile. American satellites discovered signs that SS-16's were being moved about under cover of darkness, concealed in wooded areas, and tested on ranges partly covered with camouflage netting. As a result, Secretary Laird said, we could not be sure whether the Russians were producing SS-16's merely in numbers sufficient to replace older missiles, as the 1972 SALT treaty allows, or enlarging their missile force illicitly beyond the number permitted by SALT. All we knew was that by "elaborate concealment" the Soviet Union had deliberately interfered with the means of verifying compliance with the SALT treaty, which was itself a flagrant violation of the treaty.

Secretary Laird also reported that when the Soviets were testing their SS-20 missile—the medium-range missile that has been deployed in large numbers in Russia and aimed against targets in Western Europe—they scrambled or coded the radio signals which are normally transmitted from the missile to the ground during a test flight so that missile experts can monitor the missile's performance. Because the signals were coded, United States experts could not decipher them to determine the characteristics of the SS-20's.

When the experts finally were able to break the code, they concluded that the SS-20 missiles had been tested with a ton of ballast aboard. This ballast, replaced by fuel, would increase the range of the SS-20 and enable it to attack targets in the United States. In effect the Soviet Union has constructed a dual-use missile that can be aimed either at Western Europe or the U.S., yet its numbers are not counted in the limit on Soviet ICBM's set by the SALT treaty.

The scrambling of the SS-20 radio signals was a particularly cynical violation of SALT on the part of the Soviet Union, because it struck at the very heart of the treaty—the promise by each side that it would not interfere with the other side's "national means of verification."

How did our government handle Soviet violations of the SALT treaty? Senator Edward Zorinsky brought that point up during Senate hearings on SALT II in 1979 when he asked Paul Nitze: "Do you know of any SALT violations that were not resolved . . . ?" Nitze replied: "No; but how were they resolved? They were resolved by [our side's] accepting what had been done in violation."

SALT treaty or no, the Soviet Union continued to outspend the United States by a wide margin on bombs and missiles throughout the 1970's. The United States budget for strategic forces—bombs, missiles, bombers, and submarines—went down under the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, and reached a low point of about $9 billion in 1979, at which time it was three-tenths of 1 percent of our Gross National Product. Meanwhile, Russian spending on missiles and bombs continued at a level of about $40 billion a year. By that time, the Soviet Union had spent about $1 trillion on nuclear weapons.

These numbers belie the "action-reaction" theory of the arms race, which holds that the Soviet military build-up is always a response to increases in American defense spending. As Defense Secretary Brown said: "As our defense budgets have risen, the Soviets' have risen. As our defense budgets have gone down, the Soviets' have risen."

Now the time is 1983. The Russians have been outspending us on nuclear weapons since the 1960's. In President Reagan's administration the budget for strategic forces has risen, but not enough to make up for two decades of massive Soviet weapons construction. The Soviet Union is building 150 to 200 ICBM's a year, and we are building none. They are constructing several nuclear-missile submarines a year, and we have retired old submarines faster than we have added new ones, so that the number of submarine-launched missiles in the U.S. arsenal has actually declined.

The result is that the destructive power of the Soviet nuclear arsenal is now more than twice as great as that of the United States. The missile forces of the Soviet Union also have a combination of accuracy, destructive power, and numbers that will enable them to destroy most of our Minuteman missiles in their silos in a preemptive first strike. We lack any such capability. In other words, the Soviet Union has strategic superiority.

But does it matter? As Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once asked: "What in the name of God is strategic superiority? . . . What do you do with it?" The American strategic-nuclear arsenal, divided into the population of the world, is equivalent to a half ton of TNT per person. The Soviet strategic-nuclear arsenal is equivalent to two tons of TNT per person. Nothing seems to demonstrate the folly of building additional bombs and missiles more clearly than these numbers. By any

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reasonable criterion, both the United States and the Soviet Union have acquired "overkill."

But the reasoning that leads to the idea of overkill, like the reasoning that leads to Mutual Assured Destruction, is based on an assumption. This assumption, again, has turned out to be false. The assumption is that the bombs of the Russians and of the Americans will be exploded over cities. This is what is meant by holding the civilian population hostage. The Russians, however, have made it plain that they find no merit in this idea. In their planning, the top-priority targets are not our cities but our missile silos, bombers, and submarines—and the communication links which would carry the orders for attack to their commanders. In other words, the Soviets aim to prevent us—in the event war should break out—from inflicting damage on their country.

How would the Soviet Union accomplish that objective? Civilian defense, air defense, and missile defense are part of the answer, and the Soviets have large programs in each of those areas. Civil defense is a fifth arm of the Soviet military, with status equal to that of the Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces, Air Force, Army, and Navy.

Another part of the answer is the 5,000 warheads on Soviet ICBM's. It is true that a small fraction of that huge arsenal could destroy every major city in the United States, but the warheads are not intended for that purpose; they are targeted against our 1,054 missile silos, probably two to a silo. This redundancy will insure nearly complete destruction of the American missile force, even when allowance is made for the fact that some Soviet missiles will not get off the ground, others will wander off course, and some will fail to explode.

Thus, the targeted American missile force accounts for approximately 2,000 of the 5,000 Soviet ICBM warheads. Another 500 warheads could be targeted on military airfields and whatever nuclear-missile submarines are in port or can be located. An additional 500 warheads could be allotted to the destruction of our military command-and-control centers and our military-communication links, with the aim of compromising the system by which instructions flow from the President and senior officials to military commanders in the field for the launch of a retaliatory strike on the Soviet Union.

This would leave a force of 2,000 ICBM warheads still available to the Soviet Union for use in deterring the United States from launching a retaliatory second strike with the ICBM's, bombers, or submarine missiles that had survived the first strike. If our government failed to see the wisdom of submission at this stage, and launched a retaliatory strike against Soviet cities, Russian reprisal would be swift and devastating, and the life of our nation would be ended.

What about our nuclear submarines? A great many Americans feel that submarines will be the ultimate deterrent to Soviet attack, regardless of the number of ICBM's in the Soviet arsenal. American Trident submarines are nearly invulnerable to detection when at sea, and, as President Carter once pointed out, the nuclear warheads carried on a single one of these would be sufficient to destroy all the largest cities in the Soviet Union.

The difficulty with this line of thinking is that missiles launched from submarines can only be used to attack cities and similar "soft" targets. The reason is that a submarine never knows precisely where it is in the ocean. Although the path of the submarine-launched missile may be very accurately guided during its flight, if the starting point of the missile's trajectory is uncertain, the place where it lands must be equally uncertain. As a consequence, the accuracy of submarine-launched missiles is relatively poor.

American submarines and their missiles therefore cannot be used to eliminate the missile force of the Soviet Union, or its command-and-control centers, because those targets, hardened with reinforced concrete and underground construction, can be destroyed only by the pinpoint accuracy of a direct hit. (An attack on cities does not require great accuracy, since the power of the nuclear weapon will destroy a city if the bomb explodes anywhere in the vicinity.)

These considerations indicate why American submarines cannot substitute for our force of Minutemen, as a deterrent to Soviet attack. From the limited accuracy of submarine-launched missiles it follows that these missiles can only be used against cities. Therefore they cannot be used at all, because our government will know that if used in this way, they will trigger a punishing Soviet counterattack on our own cities. What President would decide to launch our submarine missiles in an attack on Leningrad and Moscow, knowing that New York and Washington would be destroyed in return? Faced with this option, any government would prefer to live and fight another day.

In the course of time, technology will improve the accuracy of our submarine-launched nuclear missiles to the point where they will have a hard-target "kill" capability, and the American deterrent will be restored. According to present estimates, that should happen by the end of the 1980's. The intervening four to five years will be, as Dr. Kissinger has said, "a period of vulnerability such as we have not experienced since the early days of the Republic."

If the nuclear-freeze movement is successful, the period of vulnerability will be extended into the 1990's. Assuming that does not happen, how will the Russians make use of the four to five years of nuclear superiority they will still enjoy?

The Persian Gulf is the most likely target of a Soviet move. Imagine a Soviet-instigated outbreak of violence in Saudi Arabia, with American

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businessmen taken hostage, and a pro-Soviet regime installed, backed by Russian guns and Cuban mercenaries. With a substantial part of the oil flow to Western Europe under Soviet control, and the Middle East in upheaval, the United States will be tempted to intervene with conventional forces. If the Soviets respond by sending in their own troops, and conventional war breaks out, we cannot prevail. The USSR has constructed five airfields in southern Afghanistan, bringing the Persian Gulf within range of its fighter aircraft. The Soviet navy heavily outnumbers the American navy in surface ships and attack submarines. As a consequence, we will probably not be able to maintain our supply lines to the Gulf and the Mediterranean and simultaneously protect our sea lanes in Atlantic and Asian waters. Defeat will be almost certain.

Could we threaten to escalate to the nuclear level? Only this threat could hope to save us from defeat in the Persian Gulf. But now the Soviet superiority in nuclear weapons becomes the decisive factor. The United States has gone on a nuclear alert three times in the past—in 1948 in the Berlin crisis, in 1962 in the Cuban missile crisis, and in 1973 when the Russians threatened to intervene in the war between Egypt and Israel. We prevailed in each confrontation. In the first two cases we had strategic superiority, and in the third a rough parity. Today, this is no longer true. We would not dare to threaten the use of our nuclear weapons, because of the circumstances I have described.

What about a Soviet move into Western Europe? In Europe, the superiority of conventional Soviet forces would be overwhelming: approximately 45,000 tanks on the Soviet side against 17,000 in NATO; a Soviet superiority of 2 to 1 in aircraft, 2 to 1 in artillery, and 3 to 1 in missile launchers. NATO forces would not be able to withstand a massive Soviet thrust into Western Europe.

But a direct attack would not be necessary. Threats, accompanied by a general escalation of tension, would probably suffice to bring all of Western Europe under Soviet hegemony. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has described how it would happen:

> At one time there was no comparison between the strength of the USSR and yours. Then it became equal. . . . Perhaps today it is just greater than balance, but soon it will be two to one. Then three to one. Finally it will be five to one. . . . With such a nuclear superiority it will be possible to block the use of your weapons, and on some unlucky morning they will declare: "Attention. We're marching our troops to Europe, and if you make a move, we will annihilate you." And this ratio of three to one, of five to one, will have its effect: you will not make a move.

Twenty years ago, or even ten years ago, the American nuclear arsenal would have been sufficient to deter a Soviet attack on Western Europe, but that is no longer the case.

When will the Russians make their move? Leonid Brezhnev supplied the timetable a few years ago, in a speech to Communist leaders in Prague:

> We are achieving with détente what our predecessors have been unable to achieve using the fist. . . . By 1985, . . . we will have achieved most of our objectives in Western Europe. . . . Come 1985, we will be able to extend our will wherever we need to. . . .

And so we finally see why strategic superiority matters. We see how it is that, as Senator Moynihan has said, he who can blow the world up three times has more power than he who can blow it up only twice.

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Israel's New Majority

Daniel J. Elazar

A NEW "discovery" has been made about Israel: the emergence of the Sephardim, Jews from non-European background, as a political majority.* This "discovery" was initially prompted by the recognition that Menachem Begin's first electoral victory of 1977 had been made possible in part by wide Sephardi support of the Likud coalition. That this victory was not a fluke but possibly the beginning of a new political era in Israel was borne home to many in the elections of 1981, when contrary to widespread expectation Begin was returned to office—again with the aid, even heavier this time, of Sephardi voters. Then came Israel's incursion into Lebanon in the summer of 1982 which, it was claimed, was backed much more enthusiastically by Sephardim than by Israelis of European background.

By now a spate of articles on the Sephardi "phenomenon" has appeared in the American press, mostly lamenting the changes it presumably portends for the Israel political scene. Unfortunately, these articles have also propagated many false myths about the Sephardim. Two prominent examples, both as it happens by Israelis, are an article by Amos Oz, "Has Israel Altered Its Vision?," which appeared in the New York *Times Magazine* (July 11, 1982) at the height of the Israeli siege of Beirut, and "The Beirut Massacres and the Two Political Cultures of Israel," by Shlomo Avineri (International *Herald Tribune*, October 14, 1982). Both Oz, a famous Israeli novelist and left-wing intellectual, and Avineri, a well-known political scientist and former director-general of the Foreign Ministry under the previous Labor government, employ stereotyped ethnic generalizations about the Sephardim which, if they were applied to some minority in the United States, would almost certainly arouse outraged protest and charges of racism.

Oz begins by suggesting that Israel is now divided into two camps: those who oppose the present government's policies—he defines these as "the better educated young"—and everybody else, whom he stops just short of referring to as the Great Unwashed. Whereas Israel's "doves" (his term) are enlightened and rational, Israel's "hawks" are superstitious, mystical, and medieval. The dispute between these two elements in Israeli society, he contends, can only be understood against the backdrop of the early history of the Zionist movement.

According to the idyllic account Oz proceeds to give, Russian socialist idealists came to Palestine in the late 19th century, unencumbered by prejudices or even interests, united by their shared values and their common commitment to improving the Jewish situation and humanity as a whole. Once in the land they set about, in a spirit of cooperation and brotherhood, to build an ideal society. (Oz does acknowledge a tendency toward ideological dogmatism among the early pioneers, but explains that actually they were "a pragmatic lot pretending, because of some emotional urge, to be dogmatic.") This same spirit of mutuality extended to the "underground army, the Haganah" which "operated more like a youth movement than a conventional military force, relying on persuasion, voting, and consensus rather than on orders."

The ideal state dreamed of by the socialists came within an inch of being realized, according to Oz. He writes: "In short, Israel could have become an exemplary state, an open, argumentative involved society of unique moral standards and future-oriented outlook, a small-scale laboratory for democratic socialists, or—as the old-timers like to put it—'a light unto the nations.'" What happened? Thanks to the "mass immigration of Holocaust survivors, Middle Eastern Jews, and non-socialist and even anti-socialist Zionists," it all came tumbling down. The new refugees from Central Europe brought with them a desire for

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* The term "Sephardi" (after a region mentioned in the Bible) originally referred to Jews of Spain and Portugal and their descendants, then to Jews from countries along the entire Mediterranean littoral and the Middle East. In Israel today it conventionally refers to Jews from North Africa and the Middle East, to distinguish them from "Ashkenazim," or Jews from northern Europe and the countries of the West.

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"bourgeois coziness and stability," which was bad enough. But then came the Middle Eastern Jews —"conservative, Puritan, [religiously] observant, extremely hierarchical and family-oriented, and, to some extent, chauvinistic, militaristic, and xenophobic." Thus did the "small-scale laboratory for democratic socialists" fall into the clutches of the unenlightened and the reactionary.

Shlomo Avineri, who is much less ideologically committed to socialism than is Amos Oz—he is basically a "liberal" in the American sense—offers essentially the same analysis, if in a more sophisticated form. Avineri suggests that the difference between Labor Zionism—the same Labor Zionism that attracts Oz—and the variety of Zionism which dominates the present government is not only political or even ideological, but cultural. As Avineri sees it, Menachem Begin was elected by people who come from a more militaristic and less humanitarian culture than the one which previously characterized Israeli society. "The elections of 1977 that brought Mr. Begin to power," he writes,

> were a change from one political culture to another. . . . With a shift in the number of Sephardi voters (Jews from Middle Eastern countries), a larger sector of the Israeli population was made up of people from highly traditional societies, much more ethnocentric than the more secularized and liberal European Jews who had dominated Israel's politics for decades.

Avineri has this to say on the reaction within Israel to the Beirut massacre:

> The national outcry released a terrible feeling of guilt, yet the demonstrations were mainly limited to that half of Israel's Jewish population that is of European background, liberal, middle-class, and well-educated. There is doubt whether what happened really cut into the hard core of Mr. Begin's support among those Israelis who like his tough style, his "goyim-baiting" language, and his ethnocentricity.

For both Avineri and Oz, then, the issue comes down to one of Ashkenazim versus Sephardim, which, translated, means the enlightened and the well-educated versus the "ethnocentric" and the "tradition-bound," if not the "chauvinistic, militaristic, and xenophobic."

This entire conception, however, is a historical myth. A Parson Weems version of the Zionist past has been created by intellectuals like Avineri and Oz, and by the Labor establishment which they represent, in order to explain the reversal of political fortunes they have lately suffered. The myth enables them to believe that this reversal has occurred not because Labor was somehow deficient in the exercise of power, or inadequate to the needs of the times, but because the country has been overwhelmed by barbarians. The myth has been sold wholesale to the rest of the world, and especially to Israel's friends in the West, where it has come to color the views of Israel's present and future held by many opinion-makers, political commentators, and government officials. Unfortunately it does not answer to the facts of Israel's politics, and hence offers no guidance for the future.

II

On one point, at least, all can agree: Sephardim, who have a considerably higher birthrate than Ashkenazim, have become the majority among Israeli Jews, and have been so since about the time of the Six-Day War of 1967. Since then, in fact, the proportion of Sephardim has steadily increased. The trend is most visible in the elementary schools, where some two-thirds of the students are Sephardi. The demographic data are significant: the age cohorts in which first- or second-generation Israelis of Ashkenazi background are strongest are between 55 and 74, while those in which the Sephardim are strongest are 5 to 29. It is safe to assume that by now, most third-generation Israelis under the age of five are also of Sephardi background. Although the Sephardi birthrate is dropping, it will remain higher than the Ashkenazi for at least another generation.

If the basic demographic facts about the Israeli Sephardim are not in dispute, however, everything else about them is the subject of confusion and misunderstanding, if not downright distortion. The confusion begins on the semantic level. In conventional usage, Ashkenazim are labeled "Western" and Sephardim "Oriental," terms clearly intended to reflect prevailing assumptions with regard to culture and modernity. In fact, however, these terms are more self-serving (to Ashkenazim) than accurate. For example, Israel's President, Yitzhak Navon, has been hailed by all Israelis, most especially those of the Labor camp, for his moral leadership and broad cultivation. In every respect he is a quintessential representative of what Avineri, if not Oz, means by "European, middle-class, and liberal." The only problem is that he is a Sephardi, born in Jerusalem into a family that has lived in the country for many generations and that originally came to Palestine from Morocco and other parts of the Ottoman empire—in other words, a quintessential "Oriental."

Navon is only the most visible exemplar of a large population like him, including descendants of other old Jerusalem families, Jews whose fathers and grandfathers were part of the civic elite in Iraq, sophisticated products of French North Africa, heirs of the Young Turk revolution in Turkey, and so on. Indeed, before the establishment of the state of Israel, Sephardim tended to look down upon the Ashkenazim, including the Zionist pioneers, as uncouth and lacking all cultural refinement.

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As for the so-called "Western" Jews, they did indeed come from Europe in a geographic sense, but principally from *Eastern* Europe. As a class, they should no more be considered "Western" than Jews from the Islamic East. Ironically, within Ashkenazi Jewry itself, those who came from Germany long disdained those deriving from Eastern Europe, and spoke of them in the same stereotyped generalizations that these former *Ostjuden*, now the self-proclaimed bearers of Western culture in the Middle East, use about the Sephardim today.

Surprisingly enough, however, what is truly characteristic of the Jews of Israel, Ashkenazim and Sephardim alike, is not their differences but the degree to which they resemble one another, especially when compared with non-Jews anywhere. Thanks in part to intermarriage and constant migration, those differences which undeniably do exist within the Jewish people do not fall along Ashkenazi-Sephardi lines. Thus, contrary to Shlomo Avineri's assertion, the shocked and horrified Israeli response to the Christian massacre of Palestinians in the Beirut refugee camps was spread equally throughout the entire population. While undoubtedly there were people who took the event more seriously and people who took it less seriously, this was not a matter of Sephardim versus Ashkenazim. My own extensive contacts and conversations within the Sephardi community during the period immediately following the massacre convinced me of this. In fact, the only people I met who were not particularly concerned at all happened to be a group originating from the English-speaking countries—presumably the most "Western" Israelis of all.

It is evidently true that there were few Sephardim at the massive demonstration in Tel Aviv where, a week after the massacre, several hundred thousand Jews gathered to protest government "stonewalling" of an adequate investigation. (Just how many Sephardim were there, however, is unknown. The assumption that Sephardim can be recognized by their color or features is an interesting bit of racist typology that is not borne out in reality. Israel does not have a "white-black" division, although some Ashkenazim like to use such terms in private conversation.) Few self-respecting Sephardim, no matter how strong their feelings with regard to the massacre and the government's response, could see themselves participating in a rally that was clearly a Peace Now/Labor-alignment affair. In the Israeli political context, to attend the rally meant to identify politically with a group that is strongly opposed and even disliked by most Sephardim.

Indeed, politically aware Israelis understood beforehand that if Labor-party leaders were to be the principal speakers at the rally, the occasion would be turned into something more than a call for investigation and become a call for ousting the government. And so it did. Shimon Peres, in what even his supporters agree was probably a serious mistake, went so far as to call for a public commitment to the Labor-party position on the future of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, a matter which had nothing to do with the issue of the massacre and which did not command a national consensus as did the demand for a proper investigation of Sabra and Shatila.

There is no evidence whatsoever that as a group Sephardim are particularly chauvinistic, militaristic, or xenophobic. (The only group in Israel that really fits this description, Meir Kahane's tiny band of followers, consists overwhelmingly of immigrants from the U.S., with not a Sephardi among them.) At the time of the massacre in Beirut, a better sign of where Sephardim stood was the fact that within the government itself, it was the Sephardim who took the lead in forcing a change in the initial Begin-Sharon position. (They were joined by the National Religious party ministers, *pace* Amos Oz's attack on that group for being politically retrograde.) The Sephardi initiative was led by David Levy, a Herut stalwart, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Absorption, one of the most powerful men in the Likud, and, as recently as five years ago, the archetypal example in the minds of most Israelis of the primitive "Moroccan." Joining him was the Minister of Social Welfare, Aharon Uzan, another Jew of North African birth, the representative of the Tami party, which is Israel's closest approximation to a Sephardi party and is viewed by many Ashkenazim as responsible for introducing "ethnic" divisiveness and "spoils" politics into the Israeli system (as if Labor were not a past master at these practices). And the most thoughtful challenge to Begin's position was presented by Iraqi-born Mordechai Ben-Porat, Moshe Dayan's heir to the leadership of the Telem party.

While the mass public demonstration in Tel Aviv did much to save Israel's image in the world, and properly so, it could be dismissed by Begin as an opposition ploy, while the Sephardi-led revolt within the cabinet did indeed bring about the establishment of a formal investigation commission with full powers.

III

Are there no differences, then, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim? Of course there are. Some of these differences are cultural, or perhaps more accurately subcultural, in nature. To begin with a homely example, Ashkenazi food (in the United States known erroneously as "Jewish cooking") tends to partake of a certain plain heaviness characteristic of Eastern and parts of Central Europe, while Sephardi cuisine is light and sophisticated in the manner of the cuisines of Spain, Italy, and Greece. Music provides another such example. While all Jewish

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music has been traced back to a common root, Ashkenazi music developed under the influence of the Russian Orthodox church, while Sephardi music mixes Iberian and Arabic elements. Actually, classical Sephardi music is much closer to the Western music of Bach, Haydn, and Mozart since it drew from late medieval Spanish influences, while Ashkenazi music remained exclusively Eastern.

If these cultural differences seem relatively trivial, others are more consequential for Israel's future. The Sephardi attitude toward religion, for example, tends to be open and far from fanatic, with both the observant and the nonobservant sharing a common respect for Jewish religious tradition and a tolerance for varying *degrees* of observance. The Ashkenazi attitude, on the other hand, tends to be ideological and uncompromising; many Israeli Ashkenazim are either unbendingly religious or unbendingly secular. The militant, black-garbed Jews who throw stones at vehicles on the Sabbath and refuse to serve in the army are not Sephardim. As Sephardim are proud to point out, there was never a religious reformation in their world; whichever way individual Jews elected to practice their faith, they could stay within a common fold because they were not forced to make clearcut ideological choices.

If this puts many Sephardim at odds with the Ashkenazi religious establishment, it also puts them at odds with secular Jews. That minority in Israel, no more than 20 percent of the population, which has to all intents and purposes rejected Jewish religious tradition and has sought to express its Jewishness through a highly secularized Zionism, is indeed far removed from the Sephardim. That is one of the reasons Sephardi voters can look at Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, and others of the Labor party and fail to see them as "Jewish," while Menachem Begin, with his respectful attitude to tradition, is so attractive to them. The fact that it is often these same secularists, and particularly the intellectuals among them, who have given voice to the idea that there are "two cultures" in Israel, and who have bemoaned the movement of Israeli society in a "Sephardi" direction, serves further to alienate Sephardi voters from the Labor party.

One way of understanding the cultural distinctions that I have been drawing between the two groups is to see them as running not along East-West lines—there are Easterners and Westerners in both groups—but on a North-South axis. *Most* Israelis come from cultures which people from Western Europe and America would label as "Eastern." Some are from Eastern Europe, the North's East, and some are from the Islamic world, which is really the South's East. Perhaps that is one reason why, despite the cultural differences between the two groups, the resemblances are even more striking. Jews from Arab lands are no more like Arabs than Jews from Poland or Russia are like Polish Catholics or Russian Orthodox Christians. Indeed, one of the significant lessons that emerged from the Israeli response to the Beirut massacre was that the Jews of Israel, Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike, regard such behavior as abhorrent to *all* Jewish morality, a reflection of the problems of becoming involved with Arabs—even Christian Arabs—who operate according to a different moral code.

It is safe to predict, then, that the demographic shift in Israel is not about to bring about any loss in the traditional Jewish character of the state, or of Israeli culture. There may be some changes in the offing, however, in the *style* of Israeli culture. Right now, for example, a struggle is going on between new Sephardi theater groups and the Israeli theatrical establishment, which has been open only to those Sephardim who have accepted its particular Left-liberal approach. Sephardi music may become more influential. In the sphere of religion, if the Ashkenazi-dominated establishment and the secularists do not succeed in squelching Sephardi self-expression, the more moderate and open Sephardi religious approach may become more powerful as well. In general, Israeli society may also become more polite and less abrasive as the socialist rejection of bourgeois manners wanes and as the Sephardim become more influential.

IV

This brings us to the relative social and economic status of Sephardi Jews. In any discussion of this subject one factor often pointed to is that of modernization. It is generally true that the Jews of the North's East began the process of modernization a generation or so before those of the South's East—even though the Jews of North Africa were emancipated by the French before the Jews of the Russian empire were emancipated by the Russians. Thus most European Jews acquired such things as indoor plumbing and toothbrushes somewhat earlier than most of their Afro-Asian brothers. But since everyone in Israel has learned to use or misuse such devices and others like them, the whole issue is a transient one.

If any serious differences remain with regard to modernization, they are attributable to an unequal history of opportunity. Thus the Ashkenazim, either because they came before the Sephardim or because they could turn to relatives who had arrived earlier and thereby get preferred treatment, managed as a group to advance more rapidly up the economic ladder than did the Sephardim, most of whom came a little later and had virtually no personal links to the then-existing establishment.

Even so, it is a mistake to think of the Ashkenazim as an upper group and the Sephardim as a lower one. While it is true that 90 percent of those living in neighborhoods considered disad-

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vantaged are Sephardim, only 30 percent of Sephardim live in such neighborhoods. The other 70 percent are well integrated into the society at every level, from the highest (President Navon and the Recanati family, the principal owners of the Israel Discount Bank), to storekeepers and professionals who make a comfortable living in their chosen fields of endeavor, to university professors, to taxi-drivers, and so forth.

Statistics show that most Sephardi children are in need of special educational assistance, but this datum is misleading, since the definition of who needs special educational assistance includes, as one of its elements, the mere fact of Sephardi background. To the extent that Sephardim remain undereducated, it is as a result of their position in Israeli society in the early years after the mass migration of the late 40's and 50's.

In fact, one of the causes of Sephardi resentment against the Labor party goes back to the days when the majority of Sephardim were still in immigrant camps, and social workers sent by Mapai or the government pressed them to leave school after seventh grade so that they could work in the fields and orchards. The social workers often did this out of the best of motives; they sincerely believed in Amos Oz's brand of Zionism, according to which the Jews would become a "normal" people by becoming farmers. But the fact that these same social workers were simultaneously sending their own children to high school and college was no laughing matter to the Sephardim, who were being doomed by good intentions to the bottom of the pyramid, and had to fight their way up from there. To highlight the irony, there are studies showing that among families who separated, some going to France or North America and others to Israel, the ones who went to the West became doctors, lawyers, and academics in the same proportions as other Diaspora Jews.

Sephardim suffered from another disadvantage which could not have been foreseen. Some ten years after the mass migration which followed the establishment of the state, German reparations to Holocaust victims began to flow into Israel. Many Ashkenazi Jews benefited directly from those reparations, which came at precisely the moment when the immigrants from both groups had become sufficiently rooted to take a great leap forward economically. The Ashkenazim acquired the resources to do so while the Sephardim did not, creating an economic gap for which no one was to blame but which inevitably had social and political consequences.

V

One political consequence of the gap is summed up in the word "Levantinization"—the earliest of the canards hurled against the Sephardim by the Ashkenazi establishment. Shortly after the founding of the state it became fashionable to blame every deviation from the socialist ideal on the "Levantine" influence of the immigrants from the Arab world. The fact that during this entire period these immigrants were essentially powerless did not keep them from being used as scapegoats in this way. The truth is, however, that deviations from the ideal patterns of socialist Zionism and the occasional corruption which accompanied them were indigenous to the pioneers and the sons of the pioneers, the members of the Ashkenazi socialist elite, and are as much a reflection on the culture of Eastern Europe as on that of the Middle East. This may be small comfort to those who would like only a continuously improving Israel, but it does put matters in a proper perspective. Perhaps there *will* be a "Levantinization" of Israel when the Sephardim become dominant—I tend to doubt it—but whatever there may be in today's Israel that deserves that label is fully the property of the Ashkenazim.

Ashkenazi intellectuals are also fond of accusing Sephardim of anti-democratic tendencies, citing such "evidence" as the chant that is sometimes heard at pro-government political rallies, "Begin, King of Israel." Aside from the fact that this chant, derived from a Hebrew folk expression, is generally the work of teenagers organized by the local Herut party branch, and thus hardly represents a considered political ideology, the truth once again is that of the few anti-democrats in Israel today, the leading ones happen to be Ashkenazim—people like Meir Kahane, or Dr. Israel Eldad, a native of Poland who wants strong-man rule, or certain members of the extreme Orthodox camp who look forward to the restoration of the Davidic monarchy with the coming of the Messiah.

But it should not surprise us to learn that in this area too, the area of politics and government, Ashkenazim and Sephardim share the same basic attitudes and expectations. The Jews who gathered in Israel from various parts of the world brought with them the political assumptions of their respective environments. Both those from Eastern Europe and those from the Arab world, with few exceptions, came from subject political cultures where the whole idea of citizenship did not exist, while those who had been exposed to continental European politics came with Jacobin views of what a state should be. What is more important, however, is that all shared to a greater or lesser degree a common *Jewish* political culture which has been republican since the earliest beginnings of the Jewish people, and often democratic to boot. Jewish communities in the Diaspora no less than Jewish polities in the ancient land of Israel functioned along republican lines throughout the ages. With a few local exceptions, the Jewish people has never known indigenous autocratic rule. Indeed, Jewish political culture cannot be other than republican. Even its corrupt forms are

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corruptions of republicanism. That is a major secret of Israel's success as a democracy.

If Sephardim and Ashkenazim share a common political culture, this is not to deny the differences in their political attitudes. One such difference concerns the Arabs. The Sephardim from Islamic lands are both more at home with Arabic culture and more realistic about Arab intentions. Ashkenazim, on the other hand, tend to be further removed from an understanding either of Arabic culture or of the Arabs themselves, and thus more susceptible to unrealistic expectations and perhaps also unrealistic fears. Moreover, the fact that a real and growing majority of Israel's Jews not only are native to the Middle East and the Islamic world but come from families that have been in the region from time immemorial means that they have as much "right" to be there as anybody else, and also feel that they do.

VI

THERE is one sphere in which Sephardim have failed to make progress commensurate with their strength in Israeli society, and that is in the sphere of public life. Here a bit of historical background is in order. Under Turkish rule, the leaders of the Sephardi community in Jerusalem were also the leaders of the entire Jewish community in the country. It was only after the British conquest during World War I and the establishment of mandatory Palestine that power passed into the hands of the Zionist movement, and within the Zionist movement, after a brief struggle, into the hands of the socialists of the Labor camp. With the victory of Labor in the late 1920's, most Sephardim tended to withdraw from politics, seeing little point in competing with what was essentially a monopoly. Thus, among the old Sephardi families who were rooted in the country, relatively few continued to engage in public affairs.

When the new Sephardi immigrants arrived after the establishment of the state, they had to undergo a period of settling in before they could even aspire to compete in a highly organized and centrally dominated political arena. Even so, by the late 1950's, a mere decade or less after their arrival, they began to assume leading positions in local government in the development towns and rural settlements where they formed the majority, often after contests with Mapai "carpetbaggers" who had been sent in by the party headquarters to run things.

By 1968, Sephardim were represented in these local governments roughly in proportion to their share of the total population. They had achieved a political base and a jumping-off point for what, in the last few years, has become a major move into national politics.

It was during this period that first Mapai and then its successor, the Labor party, made their fatal mistake, encouraging (belatedly) Sephardi office-holders on the local level but discouraging any effort to advance beyond that. More Sephardim did appear on the Labor lists in the early 1960's but these were essentially people without political power, dependent upon the party hierarchy for their offices and often chosen only for symbolic purposes. As younger people approached the Labor-party organization seeking places within it, they were told, sometimes directly and sometimes obliquely, that there was no room for them. Most of the bright young Sephardi Knesset members within Herut today had the experience of being personally rejected by Labor, to which they had initially turned because it was the majority party.

Herut, being an opposition party with a weak local base and nothing much to lose, welcomed these Sephardim and gave them the opportunity to embark on political careers, thereby forming a cadre which is now coming into its own and which will soon be playing a major role in the government of Israel. In the meantime, the Labor establishment was getting tired, as all establishments do, and even a bit corrupted by power, in the way of the world. Morover, it was making enemies. Beginning with the 1965 elections, there began to be defections from Labor's ranks. Splinter parties formed within Labor itself. What was more important in the long run, younger voters in general, new to the political process, began voting Herut, and then Likud (the coalition of which Herut is the dominant party). This trend has continued so that today, voters under forty-five, Ashkenazim as well as Sephardim, are more likely to vote Likud than Labor.

At the same time, the Sephardim began to gravitate to Likud for their own reasons. In addition to the opportunity for younger politicians to get ahead, once the rank and file became affluent enough to consider their situation, an accumulation of resentments came to the fore. Many recollected the way in which they had been treated by Labor: the way the people who received them in Israel had tried to secularize and "modernize" them, and sent them off to work in the fields or in development towns instead of allowing them to continue their education; the way their culture and habits had been misunderstood, and their transition to a new society made more painful than it already was merely by virtue of the fact of dislocation.

In the 1950's the Sephardim had been incapable of resisting Labor pressures or even understanding them sufficiently to distinguish between what was real, such as the need to settle the country's open spaces, and what was not, such as the assumption that socialist Zionism represented the right way to express Jewish ideals and to achieve "modernization." But once Labor lost its aura and came simply to seem a party like other parties, pursuing political office and the rewards thereof, Labor's hold on the Sephardim collapsed. This was espe-

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cially true for the younger generation which had not yet been habituated to thinking of Labor as the only legitimate rulers of the state.

There were positive attractions to Likud as well. Menachem Begin appealed to the Sephardim as one "outsider" to others. He could empathize with their need for self-respect, and project their sense of Jewishness. So as the Sephardim became alienated from Labor, they were attracted to the Likud as an alternative.

If in the 1960's Labor's initial response to Sephardi grievances was to ignore them, on the assumption that the Sephardim could be kept in line, after Begin's upset victory in 1977 the party reacted with a politics of nostalgia that insulted the Sephardim at home exactly as Oz and Avineri and others have done abroad. Yet the more the Labor party invoked the good old socialist days, or repudiated religious expressions of Judaism for secular ones, or allowed its extreme elements to speak of Sephardim as "punks" and "bums," the angrier the Sephardi population grew.

The results were clear in the 1981 elections, when probably more than two-thirds of Israel's Sephardim voted for the Likud or other parties in the government coalition. (Ashkenazim voted in something like the reverse proportion.) Contrary to the Labor myth that it was only the less educated Sephardim of lower socioeconomic status who voted Likud, the evidence is overwhelming that in the last elections Likud and its coalition partners drew equally well from all strata of the Sephardi population—including white-collar workers, professionals, and the growing number of Sephardim teaching in universities.

Yet despite Begin's positive attractions, the heavy Sephardi vote for him in 1981 reflected not so much a love for the man as a sense that he could be counted on to offer opportunities to Sephardim because it was in his political interest to do so. Moreover, in the interim between 1977 and 1981, Sephardim had come to constitute some two-thirds of the Herut party membership. They are probably going to inherit that party in the future, and through it they will move from second-level to first-level positions in public life.

VII

The present struggle between Sephardim and Ashkenazim over political power may not last longer than this generation, but in the meantime Likud is likely to become and remain the country's majority party. Although Israel has a political system in which two main parties compete for control of the government, there are differences in backing between Labor and Likud that go beyond what the present distribution of seats in the Knesset would indicate about the relative strength of the two.

For one thing, given the fact that the Sephardi population is growing faster than the Ashkenazi, and is likely to become an even greater majority in the future, demographic inertia alone could cause the Labor alignment to lose an additional 1 percent of the electorate from election to election, with a corresponding Likud gain; this could translate into a 2-percent shift (2-3 Knesset seats) in favor of the Likud every four years.

Another consideration is that at least four of the Labor alignment's seats are due to Arab votes. This is in its way a tribute to the health of Israeli democracy, since many Arabs who once voted for separate Arab parties demonstrated in 1981 that they are prepared to vote for mainstream parties and in that way gain their share of political power. But if circumstances change, their votes could be lost to Labor as abruptly as they were won. On the other hand, most Likud partners cannot readily transfer their ties elsewhere, and especially not to a Labor-led coalition. Each has its reason: the religious parties because Labor has become so demonstratively secular; Tami, the Sephardi-dominated party, because Labor has become so anti-Sephardi; and Tehiya, the Greater Land of Israel party, because Labor is for "territorial compromise." Since the Likud synthesizes all these elements within its coalition, its real strength is something like three-fifths to two-thirds of the Jewish vote—a very strong base indeed.

For these reasons, although Prime Minister Begin has lost much in the way of public confidence after the events in Beirut last September, in any new election the Likud is likely to win more seats than it did in 1981. However much the events of the summer may have disturbed Israelis of all stripes and persuasions, Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike, the majority of the public and certainly the majority of Sephardim do not see the way clear to voting for an unreconstructed Labor alignment—even one with a Sephardi like Yitzhak Navon at its head.

The present struggle between Ashkenazim and Sephardim is a normal struggle for power among "ins" and "outs." It should not be read as more than that, but also not as less, for it will dominate this generation of Israeli politics. Unless the elements that constitute this struggle are understood, Western predictions about the future of Begin and the Likud coalition are likely to founder on a rock of wishful thinking and misperception.

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Babel the Jew

Arkady Lvov

Misfortune prowled beneath the windows like a beggar at daybreak.

—Isaac Babel

THE leaves of '36, '37, and '38 had already fallen: those who had to be were shot; those who had to be were shipped to Kolyma in Siberia; those who had to be were banished forever to the wilderness, the tundra, the mines—places which, from time immemorial, have always been plentiful in Russia. Eventually, those who did the shooting and the banishing were themselves put against the wall, including Peoples Commissar Nikolai Yezhov, head of the NKVD, who, regardless of season or weather, always wore the same iron gloves. Lavrenti Beria took his place (until he too was dispatched), looking out at Moscow and all of Russia from the windows of his office in the Lubianka prison.

Misfortune, prowling the countryside like a beggar at daybreak, found the windows of an Odessan Jew who was then living in the artists' settlement at Peredelkino, south of Moscow, an Odessan Jew named Isaac Babel, Isaac Emmanuelovich Babel. This was in the spring of '39, in May, "the most miraculous month of May, when love blossoms," as another Jew, a poet from Germany, once said.

Babel was an Odessan Jew and like all Odessan Jews, curious by nature. Curious and inquisitive. Until 1916 he had lived in Odessa in the house of his father, who had a shop in the Jewish quarter of Moldavanka on Hospital Street, and studied Hebrew, the Bible, and Talmud. His home life was difficult. Not because there was no bread—bread there always was, thank God—but because he was forced to submit to a variety of disciplines from dawn to dusk. Rest came only at school, the Odessa Commercial College of Nicholas I which Babel described in an autobiographical fragment. Sons of foreign merchants, Polish nobility, Old Believers, and many overgrown billiard players studied there. But the majority were sons of Jewish brokers, from decent homes, decent Jewish homes. During breaks, they went to a Greek café to play billiards, or strolled down to the port, not for the sake of their future professions as agents or brokers, but just to hang around the pier and watch the boats. After that they fell into the habit of taking off for the Jewish quarter of Moldavanka to drink cheap Bessarabian wine.

Those days—those golden days!—stuck so firmly in his memory that many, many years later, the forty-year-old Babel would call to his dying friend, the poet Eduard Bagritsky, also from Odessa: "It's time to leave all other cities, it's time to go home to Odessa, to take a little house on Near Mills, to tell stories, to grow old. . . ."

A person who doesn't ask questions, it was once noted, is half dead. Until the spring of '39, to the very last day of his life, March 17, 1941, when he was not asking, but answering them, Babel spent his whole life asking questions: of himself, of others, of God. These questions had led him, before the Revolution, to St. Petersburg, where he lived without a residence permit in the cellar of a drunken waiter and wrote stories; then to the Rumanian front as a soldier in the army; then—during the turmoil of the civil-war period—into the Cheka (the first Soviet secret-police organization); then into the Northern Army against the White counter-revolutionary forces, led by Yudenitch; and two years later into the Red Cavalry of General Budenny, which became the source of his great stories.

In the 30's, even after the writers' conference of 1934 where he made the inscrutable remark describing himself as a "master of the genre of silence," he continued to ask questions. In his search for answers Babel went about among his acquaintances quite recklessly, taking tea with Yezhov's wife (an old friend) at Yezhov's own house, for example, though he knew how dangerous it was. My God, must one explain that an Odessan Jew in search of an answer is willing to pay anything? Yes, yes anything, though it was in Odessa that the expression "to die of curiosity" originated. Those who see in these words hyperbole or metaphor are deluding themselves: these words must be understood literally in their physical or, more precisely, their physiological sense.

At that time, according to Ilya Ehrenburg's memoirs, Babel said: "These days a man can speak

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openly only with his wife, and that only at night, with the covers over their heads." Apparently, he did not follow his own advice. He must have talked openly with many others besides his wife or else these words of his would not have reached us. In any case, his arrest, in May 1939, is mysterious. There was one theory that he had allowed himself to tell a joke at the expense of the Big Boss; another was that Budenny, who had been mortally insulted by Babel's collection of stories, *Red Cavalry*, had a long arm. What the real sequence of events was, we shall probably never know, for following his arrest, as we learn from Nathalie Babel,* all Babel's unpublished manuscripts were confiscated by the Soviet authorities and they were probably destroyed with the rest of the secret-police archives in December 1941, as the German army approached Moscow. From 1939 until the early 1950's, Babel's name was taboo in the Soviet Union. His books no longer existed in the stores, and his name was expunged from all textbooks and encyclopedias.

IN 1954, a year after Stalin's death, Babel was rehabilitated (Soviet justice would need a lot more time for the rehabilitation of other literary types) and by 1957, his *Selected Works* had been published in the Soviet Union with a foreword by Ehrenburg. But no sooner had the ink dried on the pages of the first posthumous edition of *Red Cavalry* and *Tales of Odessa* than an attack was launched against them in several prominent literary magazines in articles whose veiled, insinuating tones were reminiscent of the time of the Big Boss. These articles tried to prove that Babel not only was not a native Russian writer, but was also a man without a people and without a tribe or, to be more precise, belonging to a tribe to which tribelessness would be preferable. How, indeed, could he be described as a man without a tribe when everything—his way of speaking, of being silent, his way of thinking, even his bald spot (not to mention his habit of sticking his nose in everywhere)—betrayed this man as originating not from Corelov, Neelov, Neurozhaika, or some other honest province of the Russian heartland, but from the land of *etrogs* and figs—in short, from the Jerusalem gentry?

The attack was unremitting and neither spontaneous nor casual. On the contrary, it was all very orderly and its authors had obviously calculated carefully before uttering a word. And a word, as is well known, is not a sparrow—once it flies forth, you can't catch it again.

This attack proceeded in spite of the fact that none other than Maxim Gorky, the father of socialist realism himself, had publicly compared Isaac Babel with Gogol, and had even recognized that Babel portrayed his Cossacks more skillfully than the Russian classics did. One critic, Pavel Novitsky, in a work on Babel written in the mid-20's, even compared Babel to the premier Russian poet Derzhavin, that same Father Gavril Romanovitch Derzhavin, poet and senator, who first recommended that his sovereign, Paul I, son of Catherine the Great, forbid the importation of all Jewish books into Russia. With a thoroughness that would make any truehearted anti-Semitic officer hang himself from the highest branch out of sheer envy, Derzhavin drew up a plan, down to the minutest detail, for preventing the damn Jews from smuggling their contraband Torah and Talmud across the border.

Yet Novitsky was right in my opinion. However much Derzhavin would have detested the idea, he and Babel had something in common: a similar use of metaphor deriving from the fact that they both took their imagery from the same source, the Bible. Both the Russian poet and the Jewish writer were specialists in Holy Writ, albeit each in his own way or, if you please, each in accordance with his own tribe. Derzhavin's "sapphire looks," "crimson lips of dawn," "purple in the grapes," are certainly related to Babel's "hot purple mantle" and "dusty golden sunset," though it is admittedly hard to imagine Derzhavin writing "straw-colored cow's udders" or "raspberry warts."

Be that as it may, new times bring new tunes. A writer castigated in the 20's and 30's as a representative of "the poetry of banditism," whose work at the end of the 50's was subjected to meticulous chemical analysis because of the onion and garlic smell allegedly emanating from it (onions being considered a Jewish delicacy in the Ukraine), was in the 70's—that is not so very long ago—claimed by the Soviets as their own. In a monograph entitled "Revolution and Literature," which is the definitive word on the subject, and whose second edition was issued in the unheard-of number of 20,000 copies, the literary authority Yuri Andreev claims Babel as a precursor of socialist realism. To be sure, Babel did not quite achieve this shining goal, but at least he was on his way. As Andreev puts it, "The works of I. Babel, . . . having begun in the company of writers democratic in spirit but holding abstract humanistic views . . . moved toward socialist realism. His evolution was slow and contradictory, the forward motion often containing anachronistic works, but it was a steadfast evolution."

In support of this view, Andreev cites the diaries of the Soviet author Dmitri Furmanov, Babel's friend, who claimed that *Red Cavalry* was not really Babel's last word on the subject. According to Furmanov, Babel was planning to write no fewer than ten more novellas about the cavalry which would give the other side of the picture—convey "positive things about the cavalry" and "fill in the gaps" left in the portrait he had already painted. Andreev says further that Babel also wanted to

* *You Must Know Everything, Stories 1915-1937*, translated from the Russian by Max Hayward, edited, and with notes, by Nathalie Babel (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1966).

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write a novella about the Chekhists (precursors respectively of the GPU, the NKVD, and today's KGB) but found himself unable to do so on the astonishing grounds that the Chekhists were "saintly people" and the writer feared that the novella would come out too sickeningly sweet!

WHAT is one to make of these claims? To begin with, it must be noted that neither of these plans was ever realized and one suspects that had Babel lived to be a hundred and twenty, they would never have been. Was Furmanov lying, then? I think not. Furmanov, a loyal party member, was above all a decent man, indisputably talented, and Babel respected and trusted him. At a conference in Furmanov's memory ten years after his death, Babel paid tribute to his friend, calling him the "one truly righteous man" he had met in those troubled days. Did the author of *Red Cavalry*, then, deceive the man to whom he paid this tribute, the one man in the Soviet literary establishment with whom he shared his thoughts and plans? The answer, I believe, is yes, and it is really not too hard to understand why. The author of a work which had torn the ultra-revolutionary and ultra-Bolshevist veil from Budenny's legendary cavalry could not help deceiving a fellow writer, however good a friend, who was considered a model Bolshevik even during his lifetime (though this was still in the roaring 20's, not yet the bloody 30's).

Yet this deception was by no means a conscious, intentional lie. Mainly, it was himself that Babel was deceiving. We must remember that Babel had acquired a second identity during the civil-war period, that of K. Lyutov, the non-Jewish alias provided for him by his superiors, along with appropriate documents, when he was assigned as a reporter to the army newspaper, *Red Cavalryman*. In the September 19, 1920 edition of that paper K. Lyutov cheered on the Red Army nurses in the rough tones of a Cossack commissar: "There they are, our heroic nurses! Take off your hats to our nurses! Soldiers and commanders, these nurses deserve our greatest respect! We must finally distinguish between the fairies on the transports who disgrace our army and the martyr-nurses who beautify it." Does this sound like the Babel we know?

Compare this with the way Babel wrote about army nurses on another occasion, not too long after, this time under his own name. In the story "The Widow" he describes the nurse Sasha who, while dressing the wounds of her dying husband Shevelev at the front, has sex with Lyovka the coachman before his very eyes, then taunts her helpless husband with the imminent death that's already "in your guts."

Were those "heroic nurses," then, also a lie? In my opinion, they were rather a half-truth, born of that part of Babel who signed himself—not unwillingly—Lyutov, and who, in the early days at least, was a supporter of the Revolution. In the same way, perhaps Babel did really want to write those "positive" novellas glorifying the fine swordsmen of Budenny's cavalry, and perhaps even the novel extolling the "saintly Chekhists" ("saintly" perhaps in the sense of fanatically devoted to their duty as, for instance, Torquemada and Ignatius Loyola were to theirs). But he was unable to do these things for the simplest of reasons: his Jewishness prevented it. As a Jew and the son, grandson, and great-grandson of Jews, behind whom stretched thousands of years of suffering and wandering, and furious quarrels with God, he could not bring himself to bow down before false idols, however much he might have wanted to.

In 1924 the author and critic Victor Shklovsky wrote an essay on Babel attempting to describe his special qualities: "A foreigner from Paris, . . . Babel saw Russia as a French writer assigned to Napoleon's army might have seen it." A few years later, such a compliment would have been enough to put a writer away for good, but in 1924, it was relatively harmless. Still, one must marvel at the extraordinary blindness of a literary critic capable of mistaking an Odessan Jew for a Frenchman of the Napoleonic era. A few years earlier this same Shklovsky, living at the time in Berlin in the White Russian émigré colony there, showed himself far shrewder in talking about Marc Chagall, another Russian Jew, than he had been about Babel. Chagall, Shklovsky remarked, did not feel the same need to return to Russia as other exiles did because he carried his home village of Jewish Vitebsk with him.

In the same way, Babel carried Odessa with him, though he was probably not even actually born in Odessa proper, but in the neighboring city of Nikolaev, where he spent his childhood. Babel's long-time friend, Valentin Katayev, has confirmed this—not without a tinge of spitefulness. "Babel came from Nikolaev, where his father had a store," according to Katayev, but "his whole life he tried to convince everyone that he was born in Odessa, in the Jewish quarter of Moldavanka." I once asked Leonid Utyosov, the great Russian Jewish actor—and the pride of Odessa's Jews—to clear up the matter once and for all. His reply was cagey: "Babel always said he was born in Moldavanka, and I personally think that for Babel, Moldavanka was not a bad place to have been born. Furthermore, I think it was also not bad for Moldavanka and Odessa to have had Babel born there."

When this conversation took place, Utyosov was eighty years old and had just received the Order of the October Revolution. The old man was not satisfied, however. He had expected to get the Gold Star and be named a Hero of Socialist Labor. I said to him: "Leonid Osipovitch, what need have we to make a revolution while the Order of the Revolution lies gleaming on your chest?" He answered in Hebrew: "*Hevel havolim, ha-kol hevel*" ("Vanity of vanities, all is vanity").

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WHAT name has not been put forward in an effort to find a worthy comparison for Babel? Gogol, Flaubert, Chekhov, Maupassant, Oscar Wilde, O. Henry. Gogol, because he too wrote about Ukrainian Cossacks; Flaubert, because his epithets (especially in *Salammbô*) "ate at him like lice"; Chekhov because in his words, "brevity is the sister of talent"; Maupassant, because he made use of erotica or, as purists say, pornography, and Babel often went in for what, even before the Revolution, would have come under Article 1001 of the penal code. Then there were other comparisons: with Bely, Sologub, Remizov, and other representatives of Russian ornamental prose.

Yet with all due respect for the greatness of these writers, the truth is that Babel did not really resemble any of them for the simple reason that his was a Jewish mentality, a Jewish way of looking at the world, and theirs was not. One could still say this in the 20's, when Jews in the Soviet Union had almost complete equality (indeed, there are some who maintain that at that time they were even more equal than others, in which case one wonders how the others caught up so quickly). The critic Nikolai Stepanov, for example, expressed his delight in Babel's fantastic Jews, speaking in biblical language, and Pavel Novitsky, perhaps Babel's most astute critic, admired his "passionate, dry, and exacting Jewish mind."

What kind of strange bird is this, the Jewish style of seeing the world? To haters of Jews, it has always been clear enough. Take an average day or, better still, a fair day. On such a day of buying and selling, the Gentiles have been prone to tell a Jew to "stop his Jewish tricks," and no one needs an explanation, everyone understands it, or at least appears to. Similarly, when it is said of a person that he has a "Jewish head," no one, not even the most pure-blooded anti-Semite, is offended. (At this point people have lost the ability to distinguish between praise and abuse.)

In 1882, when the petty bourgeoisie of Elizavetgrad (now Kirovograd) started a pogrom, their explanation was that they could no longer stand those "Jewish tricks." These tricks consisted of Jewish mothers trying with all their might to dress their daughters in beautiful silk dresses, quite as if—and it was this which made the good folk of Elizavetgrad froth at the mouth—they were well-born young ladies and not lousy Jewesses. When a former member of the Duma, V. Shulgin, and his godson, G. Shimanov, explain why they are anti-Semites, they both allude to the "double bookkeeping system" of Jewish world consciousness—that is, one set of books for the Jews, and another for the rest of the world. Monarchs, ministers, and prelates who from time immemorial have refused Jews equality before the law, also refer to this "double bookkeeping," which allows Jews to give false testimony and perjure themselves in dealings with non-Jews.

But why bother with Gentiles when the Jews (thank God) have never lacked for attackers from their own midst? At the moment, for example, it has become fashionable among the Russian émigrés here in America to single out the Jews as the main instigators of the Bolshevik Revolution. Conversations on this subject at New York dinner parties (and at Moscow dinner parties also) always seem to end up in the firm conclusion that if there had been no Jews in Russia, there would have been no October Revolution, for the Russian people woud never have permitted the events of anti-Christ October to have taken place.

HISTORY is not a laboratory for the performing of experiments—each experience is the first and the last of its kind. Still, there is room for conjecture. Let us imagine for a moment (these are only dreams, empty fantasies) that there had been no Jews in Russia. The Decembrists would still have existed, the Czar would still have been murdered, the events of 1905 would have occurred with or without the Jews. Russia was suffocating, so much so that a quick browse through the pages of Tolstoy, Shchedrin, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov would have been enough to trigger a yearning for the Revolution that was, by that time, impossible to put off any longer. After all, they had put it off for nearly half a century.

Let us go back even further, to ancient Rus. Starting with Ivan the Terrible, the defenders of the people were slain, burned, and quartered by the servants of the Czar, and they in turn rose up to slay, burn, and quarter their oppressors—the boyars, the landowners, and the gentry. And this went on not just for a few years, but for century after century, until Alexander Herzen sounded the bell, and Chernishevsky summoned Rus to the sword. And with what did the grandsons and great-grandsons of these defenders of the people occupy themselves during the brief period of the Revolution, and the long years of the civil war that followed? Why, with the very same slaying, burning, and quartering—not of strangers or outsiders, but of their own people, with fathers killing sons, sons fathers, and brothers killing each other.

Babel's crime was to portray this, and they did not forgive him for it, as for example in the story, "A Letter," which tells in harrowing detail of a father killing his own son during the civil war only to be killed in turn by another of his sons avenging his dead brother. Or the story, "The Life and Adventures of Matthew Pavlichenko," where the Red General Matthew Pavlichenko cries out in an ecstasy of killing: "Eh you, little year 1918, my sweetheart! Can it be that we shan't be walking out with you any more, my own little drop of blood, my year 1918?"* The good general was dis-

* Citations from Babel's stories are from *The Collected Stories*, edited and translated by Walter Morison, with an introduction by Lionel Trilling (World Publishing Co., 1972). All other translations of Babel's work are by Sheila Gutter.

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tressed for nothing, however. He and his brother officers would have occasion to walk again with that drop of blood, and not just once. Millions of people would fall in the course of this bloody stroll, especially in the 30's, from Gulyai-Polye to Solovki, from Solovki to Kolyma. And all this not by accident, or because they did something wrong, but on instructions from the high command of the Revolution itself.

In the same story General Pavlichenko reads aloud a letter purportedly from Lenin himself: "In the name of the nation, and for the foundation of a nobler life in the future, I order Pavlichenko, Matthew, son of Rodion, to deprive certain people of life, according to his own discretion. . . ." But to deprive a person of life is only half of it. The other half, even more important, is to judge how best to crush the life from a person still living, and the general is eloquent on this subject: "One simply gets rid of a person with shooting, shooting . . . is merciful and for oneself infamously easy. . . . But I show myself no mercy, sometimes I spend an hour killing my enemy or even more than an hour. . . ."

For such revelations, General Budenny, commander of the Red Cavalry, called Babel a mere "lampoonist" who "looks at the world as he would at a grassy meadow, on which naked women and stallions tread." Babel did not lack for defenders against Budenny's charge. But even the support of Gorky, and the commander of the Red Army, Klim Voroshilov, proved to be insufficient when they came for him. That Babel was a Jew, of course, did not help matters any.

BABEL was assigned to Budenny's cavalry as the ordinary Russian citizen, K. Lyutov, and appeared in his own stories as a Doctor of Law from the University of St. Petersburg. Yet—though he wrote a Russian of extraordinary purity—he gives away his Jewishness at every step. Sometimes this Jewish vision is explicit, as in the fragment, "The Cemetery at Kozin," where the author, standing by the gravesite of Rabbi Azrael, slain by Chmielnicki's Cossacks, intones—in a kind of ecstatic trance—the names of Rabbi Azrael's descendants, incorporating four generations of Jewish dead in his own living consciousness. Sometimes, it is merely a flicker of acknowledgment, as in "The Road to Brody," whose final sentence—"And here am I being borne away at a jolting gallop, far from the dented stones of your synagogues"—comes down as suddenly and heavily as the leaden seal on documents of the Middle Ages. Or "Discourse on the Tachanka," a lusty epic of machine-gun carts and military strategy in the middle of which a synagogue suddenly materializes, "sightless, dented, round as a hasidic hat."

Reds did not kill Reds, or Whites, Whites, or Poles, Poles. But all of them—Reds, Whites, and Poles—killed Jews. Babel said: "I didn't choose my nationality. I am a Jew, a *Zhid*. From time to time, it seems to me that I can understand everything." And he really did understand everything: behind him stretched the four thousand years of his Jewish ancestry. He possessed that rare gift, a sense of antiquity, bestowed not by the majesty of his forefathers or their greatness but by history itself. And the feeling of antiquity is the feeling of eternity, as it is written in Ecclesiastes, "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been. . . ." What is the sense of bemoaning your pain, your suffering? The Torah does not moan, the Torah speaks about everything in one voice, for before Him there is neither small nor great, before Him everything is as one. Thus, in the story "Crossing into Poland" some Poles are slicing up an old Jew and he pleads with them: kill me in the back courtyard so my daughter won't see me die. But the Poles do not grant the Jew's prayer and he lies there dead, his head flung backward, his throat torn out, his face chopped in two, the blue blood caught in his beard like a piece of lead. Should one bewail this? Let his daughter, a pregnant Jewess, who wants to know "where in the whole world you could find another father like my father?" bewail it: this is her business. But it is not fitting for the storyteller to bewail it; his job is only to tell it.

The critic Viktor Shklovsky, cleverest of the clever, who, for the sake of a nice turn of phrase, would show no mercy even to his own mother, said of the author of *Red Cavalry*: "He talks about the stars and about gonorrhea in the same tone of voice." One need not be so very wise to understand that when one says this, it's not meant as a compliment. Yet what Shklovsky, not being a wise man, does not understand is that the Bible too, in its inscrutability, speaks in only one voice.

Babel was the first author in Russian literature to write this way, to speak in a single voice about the mightiest cataclysms and the tiniest pinpricks not visible to the naked eye, which cause the human heart to grow cold or to burn even hotter. As a result, he was able to portray the life of those years with a breadth and a depth unimagined by other writers. No one who seriously wishes to understand the events of the Russian October can overlook *Red Cavalry*, pitiless in its objectivity and sense of detail, and containing all the seeds of fanaticism and brutality which would come to full flower only later.

"Why do I have such ceaseless longing?" Babel asked himself in his diary. "Life is falling apart; I am present at a great, incessant requiem for the dead." Yet Babel the writer did not allow himself to grieve the way Babel the diarist did. Like his creation Motele Bratslavsky, the last rabbi of the Chernobyl dynasty, he rent the veil of existence with a laugh—as the wise man is instructed to do. He clapped his hands when his neighbors danced, and drank the wine which was not offered. Nor did he allow himself a single groan of pity when (in the story "Berestechko") Kudrya of the machine-gun commando, clasping the head of a silver-

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bearded old Jew accused of spying, drew his dagger with his right hand and sliced the old man's throat, being careful not to splatter himself. On all of this, he gazed without flinching.

II

We are so used to Babel's stories by now that they no longer surprise us. But are not these stories a miracle? Is it not miraculous that his work, an absolutely open manifesto of Jewishness, saw the light of day at all? Take a story like "The Rabbi's Son," for example, about the death of Ilya Bratslavsky, party member and Red Army soldier. Does the narrator mourn the death of this loyal Communist? Not at all. Rather, he mourns Ilya Bratslavsky who was the last son of Rabbi Motele. In his grief he loses all prudence, throws off that tiresome mask of a Doctor of Law from the University of Petersburg, and, from his very entrails, pours out his innermost feelings: "He —that last of the Princes—died among his poetry, phylacteries, and coarse foot-wrappings. We buried him at some forgotten station. And I, who can scarce contain the tempests of my imagination within this age-old body of mine, I was there beside my brother when he breathed his last." There is no need to explain why Babel uses the word brother here, or in what way this man is his brother.

Napoleon, when he marched on Egypt, heartened his men with the words: "Soldiers, forty centuries look down on you from the heights of these pyramids!" It might seem that French soldiers would not be overly concerned with how many centuries looked down on them from the heights of the Egyptian pyramids but Napoleon, who was a splendid psychologist, knew otherwise. He understood wonderfully well what sort of power antiquity wields over people, for antiquity means the right to a higher court, to God's court in fact.

Babel, the Jew, had antiquity in his very bones. From the height of forty centuries, he judged—not condemned, but judged—Budenny's cavalry, which was no smaller and probably even greater than Napoleon's army at the time of his march on Egypt. His word gains added authority from the fact that he himself was a soldier in this army, and a good one. According to Jakov Bliokh, the former commissar of Budenny's cavalry, who is quoted in Shklovsky's memoirs, "Babel was much loved in the army. He possessed a calm fearlessness of which he himself was oblivious. In the First Cavalry, they understood what fearlessness is."

Whatever people may feel about the Bolshevik Revolution—blessing it or heaping curses on its head—there is no denying that it is a decisive event of the 20th century. Nor can there be any dispute about the role played by the cavalry in insuring the victory of the Revolution—to this day, the Young Pioneers still sing songs about Budenny's cavalry at their meetings. That flair for history inherited from his forefathers set Babel directly on the path to the cavalry, and nowhere else, for it was the ideal vantage point from which to record the everyday life of the Revolution. This he presented in biblical language and biblical colors, appropriate to the magnitude of the event. For, to repeat, whether one blesses or curses the Revolution, there is no disputing its colossal scale. Even a blind man cannot but see the global flash of lightning that illuminates *Red Cavalry*; even a deaf one must hear the universal peals of thunder mixed in with the mad clatter of the Red Cavalry's hooves. What irony, then, that Budenny's cavalry—revolutionary apotheosis of the Cossack plunderers (as Babel puts it in the story, "Evening")—found its chronicler in the Jewish writer Isaac Babel, who once signed himself Bab-El, meaning gate of God.

Babel could not repudiate his Jewishness; the Torah and the Talmud were his flesh and blood. He was not the only Jewish writer who was made to study the holy books during his childhood, but unlike many others who, upon leaving their fathers' houses and finding themselves on their own, repudiated these childhood influences (and sometimes the Jewish people too), Babel was unable to do so. At the same time, he was also a supporter of the Revolution, though for how long and how ardently it is hard to say exactly. In any case, as the Revolution consolidated its gains, and the iron grip of Bolshevik nationalism began tightening over the land, it became harder and harder for Babel to function. The crackdown did not happen all at once, but in gradual stages. If one had to pinpoint the moment when Babel's fate as an artist was sealed, it was perhaps that day in the 30's when it suddenly became mandatory to print the word "motherland" in capital letters. Babel was arrested on May 15, 1939 (at 10:00 P.M. Moscow time); he breathed his last on March 17, 1941, in a camp somewhere in the north, at the age of forty-seven. But his death as an artist had begun long before.

The course of that death was a slow and tormented one. Signs of it may already be discerned in Babel's novel, *Velikaya Krinitsa* ("The Great Well"), a chapter of which was published in 1931. This novel, which is about the struggle to collectivize the Russian peasantry in the early years of the Revolution, represents Babel's most conscientious effort to tailor his talents to the requirements of the new Soviet society, and it simply did not work. Though his masterful technique is still in evidence, one feels a sense of strain throughout, as though Babel simply could not adjust his own specific style of seeing things to the material. Hypocrisy, as Odessan Jews used to say, lies with all four of its paws. In this case, the lie is evident in every word of dialogue between the peasant woman, Gapa Guzhva, and Ivashko, the collectivization agent. It all rings false: "Don't spurn our peasantry. . . . Come with us and share the loaf. . . . We will all be yours, Deputy, only tomorrow, not today. . . ." Stalin had made clear that the success of the collectivization effort was second in importance only

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to the Revolution itself, and not the smallest divergence would be tolerated. From the very first lines of the novel—"We will all be yours—not a minority, or even a majority—but all!"—Babel sounds like a man who is writing under orders.

Was Babel aware of the tragic nature of his position? There is no doubt that he was. We learn from Annenkov's memoirs that on a visit to Paris in 1932 Babel had talked about the possibility of not returning to Russia, but was worried about the prospects of making a living. Despite his total command of the language—Maupassant was his idol, and his earliest stories, written during adolescence, had been in French—Babel feared that the only way he could support himself in Paris would be as a cab driver, like so many other Russian émigrés. Apparently, he even went so far as to take a test for a driver's license. But what a prospect for Isaac Babel—to earn his bread behind the wheel of a taxi, even a French taxi in his beloved Paris!

There is no point in speculating about whether it would have been better for Babel to have stayed in Paris. All one need do in this connection is recall the fate of the incomparable Eugene Zamyatin, who rushed about the streets of Paris like a scalded cat in those days. Once he supposedly ran into the novelist Alexei Remizov, at the open-air market where both of them had gone to buy potatoes. "When will you begin to speak in your own voice?" Remizov asked, to which Zamyatin, overcoming the chronic breathlessness which was a symptom of his heart condition, replied with a smile: "It will happen." The prophecy was fulfilled one damp morning in March 1937 on the rue Raffeé, where the spiral staircase was so narrow that the coffin had to be carried down upright.

Or let us recall Ivan Bunin, the Nobel laureate, laid out in his coffin—also in Paris—in a darned, patched suit. Or Boris Poplavsky, a poet and artist who died by his own hand and is now Zamyatin's neighbor in the cemetery at Thyse. But enough of this: exile is exile and to no one at any time has it come easy to be a stranger in a strange land. Babel above all did not want to be a stranger in a strange land. "We from Russia," he once wrote, "miss the wind of great thoughts and great passions." But was Russia his home?

When his nine-year-old son was accepted into the *gymnasia* (high school), Emanuel Babel, a Jewish shopkeeper, arranged a celebration. At the celebration, the guests sang hasidic songs consisting of just three words sung over and over with many comical intonations. "The beauty of these intonations," Babel wrote in "The Story of My Dovecote," "may only be recognized by those who have had the good fortune to spend Passover with the Hasidim or who have visited their noisy Volhynian synagogues." The toast on this occasion was made by old Mr. Lieberman, who had taught the new-minted high-school boy Hebrew and Torah. As is the custom among Jews, Mr. Lieberman first congratulated the boy's parents, then went on to describe how their son had vanquished all his enemies at the examination—the Russian boys with their fat cheeks as well as the sons of our own vulgar rich—just as David had vanquished Goliath in olden times. "So too would our people," he concluded, "by the strength of their intellect conquer the foes who had encircled us and were thirsting for our blood." Some, at least, of Mr. Lieberman's words turned out to be prophetic: not much later, the Revolution of 1905 broke out and, along with it, bloody pogroms against the Jews.

Nevertheless, for Babel the Jew, Russia *was* home. Where there are ten Jews, there is a synagogue, where there is a synagogue, there is a Jewish village. Odessa contained hundreds of such villages. Odessa was Russia, just as Galicia and Volhynia with their Hasidim were Russia. Indeed, such is the pitiless irony of history that when the Russian October burst forth, it seemed to many Jews—by no means all, but many—that Russia would become even more of a home for them. Blind men, where were your eyes? The death sentence had already been passed. The trials of the 30's—Alberto Terraccini of the Italian Senate was the first leader of international Communism to acknowledge it publicly—were anti-Jewish trials. In March 1937, appearing at a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist party, Stalin read off the names of six Enemies of the People: Pyatakov and Livshitz, Shestov and Boguslavsky, Muralov and Drobnis. In each pair was one Jew and one non-Jew. Henceforth, for general information—*urbi et orbi*—the vast multinational Soviet land was divided into two main categories: Jews and non-Jews.

But did all this really not start until 1937? Consider Babel's wonderful story, "Karl-Yankel," in which the Odessan Jew Ovsei Belotserkovsky takes his mother-in-law to court for having had his newborn son circumcised, and for having named him Yankel instead of Karl, after Karl Marx. Was not this struggle over the baby's name between the grandmother, who had wanted a grandson so she could tell him stories about the Baal Shem Tov, and the father, a candidate for party membership, the opening skirmish in what would become a bloody battle to the death? Babel of course understood all the implications of this trial, though he presents it as farce. It is no accident that Galician *tzaddikim* "with their beaver caps on their knees" are at hand to observe the proceedings. As Babel writes, "They had made the journey to be present where, it said in the Warsaw papers, the Jewish religion was on trial."

I talked about this to the Jewish writer, Nota Lurie from Odessa, who wrote a novel in the 30's about Jewish collective farmers, *The Call of the Steppe*. Rolling his eyes and raising his arms to the heavens, Nota Lurie recalled the old days in the

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20's and even the early 30's when he was a student at the Odessa Agricultural Institute. "In those days," he told me, "all the lectures, from the first word to the last, were given in Yiddish. Now it is impossible to imagine that such a thing could have happened, or what a pleasure it was!"

Here I must disagree with Nota Lurie. I don't know about the 20's but the 30's, starting from the middle, I remember well. And what I remember is how, one after another, the Jewish schools in Odessa were shut down, though all Odessa was made up of Jews; I remember how the neighbors in our building told each other not to speak Yiddish on the street—no need to tempt the *goyim*. I remember how our Odessan Jews shook their heads and sighed when Leah Bugova, star of the Jewish theater, stopped acting in Yiddish and switched over to the Russian theater. I remember how the Jewish House of Culture on Troitsky Street, one block from Jewish Street (which had been renamed Babel Street), was made into the Regional Aviation Club, and an actual biplane (the then symbol of Soviet air power) was hauled into the building. I remember a lot more, but why go on? The point is that with the passage of the years since his release from Kolyma following Stalin's death (along with the other writers Chanan Veinerman, Isaac Guberman, and Yrma Drucker), Nota Lurie's memories of what life was like for the Jews of Odessa before the war have grown increasingly rosy.

Did Babel know about all this? A naive question. He not only knew, he felt it on his skin, every minute, every second of his life. Odessa was no exception—what was happening in Odessa was happening everywhere throughout Russia in those years, "from Moscow to the outlands," as the song says. In the early 30's Babel did a lot of traveling in Russia. He made several trips to the Ukraine and to Kabardino-Balkaria in what was then the Northern Caucasus, where a friend of his, Betal Kalmykov, was a party official. But what, as a writer, did Babel bring back from these trips? Practically nothing. Neither "Oil" nor "Froim Grach," nor "Guy de Maupassant," nor his masterpieces "Di Grasso" or "Dante Street," all of which were written during those years, owes anything to these travels, whose purpose, as Babel himself explained, was to get closer to real life, and to the Russian people.

In 1937, in an interview in the journal, *Literary Studies* (which was not published until twenty-seven years later in the journal, *Our Contemporary*), Babel, who had always been a painfully slow writer, assured his interviewer that now, as a result of all his travels, writing had become noticeably easier for him. This statement was in line with the prevailing spirit of the times. Stalin had just introduced the term "servant of the people" into general use, and Soviet writers were expected, like the ancient Greek hero Antaeus, to draw their strength from contact with Mother Earth, in this case the Soviet people.

But the most striking thing about this multi-paged interview (surpassing in length any piece from either *Red Cavalry* or *Tales of Odessa*) is the fact that Babel did not once use the term Jew or any derivation thereof. This was the same writer who not long before, in the 20's, had written a movie script, *Wandering Stars*, in which the face of the heroine, Rachel, is described as "exactly like the face of Ruth, wife of Boaz, or of Bathsheba, the concubine of David, King of the Jews, or of Esther, the wife of Ahaseurus." The Rachel of this film had come to Moscow to study, and her love for science, according to Babel's script, "was as great as Lenin's, Darwin's, and Spinoza's love for truth." Now in those days mention of the first two giants of thought, Lenin and Darwin, would have been quite sufficient, but Babel's metaphor, to remain true to itself, to remain natural, demanded still another figure, that of a Jew. He brought Spinoza in just as he brought Maimonides into the story, "The Rabbi's Son," where the Red Army soldier Ilya Bratslavsky keeps two portraits in his trunk to spur him to battle: one of Lenin and one of Maimonides.

The 1937 interview is an example of Babel's great resourcefulness, of the centuries-old resourcefulness of the Jew who, as my dear departed mother used to say ten times a day, is beaten and not allowed to cry. A Jew painfully desires to tell the truth to the point where it is a colic in his stomach, and a pain in his heart, but telling the truth is tantamount to placing his head on the block of his own free will. And who among us seriously wants to die? On the other hand, did not the Most High command us through Moses not to lie? Accordingly, Babel, with the sensitivity of a Kabbalist, talks about everything under the sun—collectivization, the civil war, great writers and lesser writers, long phrases and short phrases—and with this he gives us to understand that there is one thing he cannot talk about, the main thing.

But if he could not tell certain truths outright, nevertheless they are to be found in his work. The whole truth about Soviet power, for instance, is summed up in the story, "Froim Grach," when the one-eyed Odessan Jew, Froim Grach, head of Odessa's forty-thousand thieves, admonishes the Cheka representative sent from Moscow to Odessa to bring order: "Master, whom are you beating? . . . You are beating the eagles. With what will you be left, Master, the garbage?"* Through the lips of an Odessan Jew who is a bandit and robber but also a wise man, Babel divided the whole human mass, left to the Soviets as a legacy from Old Russia, into "eagles and garbage." The Cheka worked over the eagles, and the garbage remained—no commentary is necessary here.

Throughout Babel's work, especially in *Tales of*

* Translated by Sheila Gutter.

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Odessa and *Sunset* (which Babel wrote in both play and story form), there is a passionate dream of strong Jews, possessing their own king. The struggle for new vigor and fresh blood takes place among the Jews themselves. "Pull out my teeth, Nechama," moans Mendel, the father of Benya Krik, king of the Odessa underworld, and one of Babel's greatest portraits. "Pour Jewish soup into my veins, bend my back. . . ." Mendel Krik, athlete and ruffian, who had the reputation among Odessan cart drivers of being a vulgar man, was half beaten to death by his own sons, Benya and Lyovka. But for heaven's sake, don't think that these two Moldavanka thugs, who had stepped in to defend their mother's honor because their father wanted to leave her for a Russian woman, were intervening for any kind of noble reasons. It was simply that for them, the law was the law—in this instance, the law on which Jewish families had stood from time immemorial.

Babel knew Jewish history and had no illusions. He also knew the Jews, like Heine, who first renounced his people and then returned to them and who once said, "A good Jew is better than a Christian, and a bad one, worse." According to one old Odessan Jew, Boris Davidovitch Levenshtein, who was a friend of my father's when I was growing up in Odessa and also a friend of Babel's, Babel was fascinated by the case of Maimonides and his relations with the Jews of his era. "Babel remembered what the Jews had done with their second Moses," Boris Davidovitch told me once. "How, after his death, some rabbis teamed up with Dominican monks to collect Maimonides' books and burn them. What was there left for the Jews to do after that? All that remained for them to do was to pull out their hair—at this we are great experts."

On the other hand, Babel was also fascinated by another historical episode, the story of the Jews of York who, during the reign of Richard the Lionhearted, hid out from a mob of anti-Jewish rioters in a tower in the royal castle. When it became clear that their pursuers would find them, the men, heeding their rabbis' injunction, first killed their wives and children, and then each other.

Babel understood that we are a stiff-necked people. Even the Odessan bandits who, in the final accounting, could not have cared less from whom they stole—whether from their own people or from the Gentiles—at critical moments always remembered that they were Jews. When (in the story "How It Was Done in Odessa") the poor clerk Joseph Mugenshtein is shot accidentally by one of Benya Krik's men applying the screws to the rich man Tartakovsky, Benya makes a penitential speech to the clerk's widowed mother, the obscure and humble Aunt Pesya: "If you need my life, you can have it, but everyone makes mistakes, even God. . . . On God's part, wasn't it a mistake to settle the Jews in Russia where they would undergo the tortures of hell?"

In the end Benya arranges a spectacular funeral for the luckless Mugenshtein ("six horses like lions, two hearses with wreaths, the choir from the Brodsky synagogue"), and orders the rich Tartakovsky to pay Aunt Pesya a lifetime pension. To restore justice, as our forefathers understood it, he also condemns the slayer of Mugenshtein, Savka Butsis, to death, and carries out the sentence with his own hand. From that day on, Benya Krik becomes king of the Jewish gangs of Odessa.

Such was Babel's dream about true Jews, filled with spirit, will, and energy. In fulfilling this dream, he twice brought together two of his main heroes, the outlaws Benya Krik and one-eyed Froim Grach, who looked after their own people in dealings with the authorities—that is to say, with the Czarist police before the Revolution, and with the Bolshevik Cheka, afterward. The difference between the two cases is quite instructive, however. In the first, as described in Babel's story, "The King," Benya and his cohorts deal with an impending police raid by the simple expedient of putting the police station to the torch. As the flames crackle merrily away, Benya, passing the new police chief, salutes and says feelingly, "Good health to you, your Excellency. What can you say to such a misfortune?"

Contrast Benya's insouciance with the fate of Froim Grach, in the story of the same name. Froim Grach, mastermind of all the shady goings-on in Odessa, from the looting of the factories to the attack on the White and Allied troops, finds his last refuge under a tarpaulin in the courtyard of Cheka headquarters with ten bullets in his chest. When the Cheka representative sent to Odessa from Moscow to supervise things sees the body, he makes a remark which could have been spoken, word for word, by the Czar's police officer. "We are in power, we are the power of the state, you've got to remember that." But if the sentiment could have been uttered before the Revolution, the Cheka and its successors were to prove a lot more efficient than the Czar's police.

Interestingly enough, in the movie version of "Benya Krik," made in 1926, though not in the story, the protagonist comes to the same end as one-eyed Froim Grach. Here Babel was being faithful to actual events. Benya Krik was modeled on the legendary Odessan Jew, Moisei Vinnitsky (known as Mishka the Jap), who was the real-life king of Odessa's gangsters, and had a rather clear-cut social program: the poor are the poor and the rich are the rich, though he "expropriated" only from the rich and sometimes even gave a share of his booty to the poor. When the Reds came to Odessa, Vinnitsky went over to their side with his men, on condition that his detachment remain independent. The Reds accepted this condition, but as the saying goes in Odessa, "the music lasted only a short while and the big-shot soon stopped dancing." Lured into a shed on the road from Odessa

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to Berezovka, the elusive Moisei Vinnitsky, once and former leader of Odessa's underworld, now a Red Army detachment commander, was caught and shot. It is curious that Babel attached this ending to the film version of *Benya Krik*, but not to any of the Benya Krik stories. Apparently, what he could allow himself in writing for the movies (though probably not without the help of party comrades) he would not allow himself in his prose.

Babel's relation to the movies was rather close, especially in the last years when his writing had all but dried up, and the movies were a welcome source of money. In addition to the film version of *Benya Krik* and *Wandering Stars*, he worked on the screen treatment of Furmanov's *Chapayev* and on the screenplay of Nikolai Ostrovsky's novel, *How the Steel Was Tempered*. His last script for the movies, completed just a few days before his arrest, was called, fittingly enough, *Old Square Number Four*, the address of the Communist party's Central Committee in Moscow.

I cannot judge the merits of Babel's other screenplays, but I did see *Benya Krik* at a special screening aranged for me at the Odessa film studio; alas, as one of Babel's heroes says, if I tell you it was of little interest, you can take my word. The film was entertaining enough, especially since two of Russia's most brilliant actors, Shumsky and Lyarov, played the roles of Benya and Mendel Krik. But it was simply a picaresque tale of a lucky Odessa rogue who, after many adventures, comes to a bad end. No trace was left of Benya the King of Jewish Odessa. The Jewish spirit, the very soul of the work, had been obliterated.

WHAT happened to Benya Krik is symbolic of Babel's tragic fate as a writer. Beginning in the 20's, with the rise of Soviet power, Babel was obliged to renounce his own, that is, his Jewish, way of seeing things. The party in its wisdom decreed that the only voice to be heard in the land would be its own. Babel, having little choice, submitted to this decree, though how far he submitted out of revolutionary conviction, how far out of fear, how far out of the inertia that comes from despair, we shall never know. In 1930, for example, Babel in effect disavowed his greatest achievement, and with it himself. He publicly expressed agreement with Budenny's verdict on *Red Cavalry*, and said that he himself had never liked the work. Yet a year later, writing to V. Polonsky, editor-in-chief of *Novy Mir*, he said the opposite: "I am sorry for my bygone years, for my inner mood. I don't want to leave those years without some memorial, that's the whole thing in a nutshell." And two more stories, "Argamak" and "The Kiss," suddenly came to light, concluding the cycle of *Red Cavalry*. Thus did Babel live in those years, first putting on a mask, then taking it off, until the fatal day of his arrest in May 1939.

I RECALL the words of Isaac Babel, the grandson of a rabbi, spoken through the lips of decrepit Meir Beskonechny in "The End of the Old Folks' Home": "Life is a dungheap, the world is a brothel, people are crooks." I recall the words of Isaac Babel the Talmudist spoken through the lips of the old man Aryeh-Leib: "Man is not worth the stuff of which he is made."

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Orwell in Perspective

Herb Greer

THE ordeal of reading a new book about George Orwell* drove me to riffle through my copy of *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. I was looking for the word "symbol." Webster says it is derived from the Greek term for a token of identity, verified by comparing a thing's two halves. This is peculiarly apposite to the case of Orwell, since there are two distinct halves of his public identity, and one has tended to inflate the other out of all proportion. He stands high now among the archetypal literary figures we have today of simple men who hate and oppose political tyranny—though in the odd way these things sometimes work, his name has entered the language as an epithet for the horrors associated with state oppression of the individual. Since the publication of *Animal Farm* and especially *1984*, a gaggle of commentators, critics, hacks, and (despite Orwell's last wish) biographers have made it their business to hang onto this status while using it to distort and amplify Orwell's other half, i.e., his work as a professional journalist and novelist.

T.R. Fyvel's memoir seems to be an example of the hanging-on species; but the puffery which it does contain adds nothing to the sum of what others have claimed for Orwell as journalistic sage and political philosopher. Neither does the book add anything special to the sum of reading matter in general. I will give my reasons for this opinion, but first I should like to try and disentangle some of the confusion which Orwell's symbolic role has thrown over his actual work.

For all that he threw in his lot with the "common man," George Orwell was no proletarian himself. His background was Edwardian upper-middle class, with a colonial civil servant for a father and a mother whose family were European merchants in Burma. Orwell was born in Bengal and brought up in England by his mother. His education was private and very upper-crust; he attended Eton as a King's Scholar, though he did not continue on to Oxford or Cambridge in the normal way. He returned instead to Burma for a brief spell as assistant district superintendent in the Imperial Indian Police. In 1927, back in England on leave, he decided to resign and did so on New Year's Day 1928, settling down then to the hard grind of a rather unsuccessful writer's life.

Though Orwell published a good deal of journalism, including essays and many book reviews, and one book a year from 1933 until 1941, he remained more or less a fringe figure on the London literary scene. From the very beginning he showed an intense interest in the lower classes, and at various times tried to share their conditions of life. (His first book was *Down and Out in Paris and London*.) But it was the experience of reporting on unemployed workers in the north of England that aroused his sympathy for socialism and the Left, in 1937. This hardened into a commitment when he fought in the Spanish Civil War with a Marxist splinter group on the Aragon front.

His reports on this experience and on Soviet Communist betrayal of such groups were rejected by fellow-travelers in Britain, most notoriously by Kingsley Martin of the *New Statesman* and the publisher Victor Gollancz. Orwell managed to get the material into print under other auspices, confirming his curiously contrary role as a dissenting leftist wholly committed to the Left. To the fury of his peers, he compared Soviet tyranny to Nazism, and his fable *Animal Farm*, completed during World War II when Russia was allied with Britain and America, ran into political trouble with British and American publishers. It was brought out by Secker & Warburg in 1945, and when Harcourt and the Book of the Month Club took it up in America the following year, Orwell found himself an international success, really solvent for the first time in his life. With the appearance of *1984* three years later, the legend of Orwell as political prophet and philosopher began to gather force, and grew with the worldwide sales of his two famous books. Despite occasional murmurings of dissent, it continued to grow after his death in 1950, at the age of only forty-six.

THERE are writers, like politicians, who find their best voice in opposition. George Orwell was one of these, but used his voice inside as well as outside the group to which he belonged. He was said to have concerned himself with "the delousing of the Left" and to function as "the conscience of the Left," which is a fair description of his stance. In view of his reputation, it is all the more sad that he failed so badly in these tasks. Totalitarian "lice" on the British Left are more numerous and aggressive today than they were in Orwell's time, and have—as they did not have then—a real chance of overrunning the Labor party altogether. It is one of the unfortunate characteristics of British politics

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* *George Orwell: A Personal Memoir*, by T.R. Fyvel, Macmillan, 221 pp., $14.95.

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that Orwell's type of *cri de coeur* did and still does infuriate Stalinists, Trotskyists, and fellow-travelers instead of shaming them, and more often than not hardens their opinions. *Animal Farm* even angered a number of "liberal" American publishers and leftists. It is surprising that this brilliant little fable did not attract the wrath of American conservatives, too, since its moral, if unwritten, is quite clear: capitalism is the exploitation of man by man; (Soviet) Communism is the reverse.

In a recent article Norman Podhoretz wrote that Orwell "underwent several major political transformations" ("If Orwell Were Alive Today," *Harper's*, January 1983). This refers in part to Orwell's rediscovery of patriotism early in World War II, and to his previous assumption of a socialist label. To me it appears likely that the tags Orwell adopted were little more than attempts to find a verbal framework for his romantic attitudes, which never altered from the time he became a political animal. By his own account, the anti-establishment, anti-colonial, pro-underdog passions which characterized his politics were already taking shape during his police service in Burma. What appears to have happened later is that his brand of "socialism" provided him with a clear focus for this blend of prejudice and emotion; some of his early targets were much the same as those of today's radical chic—but he, without fear or favor, also took aim at the socialist "establishment," which at that time was jelled around the Soviet Union and its blinkered fellow-travelers. For him, truth as he saw it was always more important than the solidarity which is crucial to active political commitment.

Because of the popular bracketing of Orwell with anti-Communism, it is often forgotten (by Americans more than most) that he placed himself firmly among left-wing socialists, and specifically rejected attempts to involve him with the Right. Like the use of his name in political abuse, this is a paradox, since he remained a stubbornly uncollectivized loner all his life. His socialism was never the highly bureaucratized and centrally directed form of government which is the stock-in-trade of today's far Left. He never did explain clearly what it *was*. His writing suggests a harking back to Edwardian middle-class socialism, which urged that everyone should be better clothed, fed, and washed, and—most important—should be decent to each other, and so ameliorate the human condition.*

Because Orwell remained insistently left-wing, but ruthlessly condemned the folly, cowardice, hypocrisy, cruelty, and treachery of those who called themselves socialists, it has been claimed that he was an unusually fierce paragon of honesty. Certainly his species of frankness was uncommon among left-wing British litterateurs, but it has to be said that his honesty was, in journalistic matters at least, not much more than normal by the curious standards of the profession. He was capable of publishing obviously false rumors as fact, and when this was thrown up to him on one occasion, he brushed aside the complaint with the remark that his story was "essentially true." (In the British mandarin vernacular this means that the literal truth of the story is irrelevant; one feels it ought to be true, and that is enough.) Orwell also published, in his first book and later, a certain amount of what is now called "faction," some with due warning and some without. I am not suggesting that he was a hypocrite. On the contrary, I believe that he was probably as artless in such matters as it was possible to be, and he clearly did have a formidable hatred of hypocrisy. But it is no service to him to exaggerate this by claiming that he had the rectitude of a saint.

One of the fascinating and amusing aspects of Orwell's life and work was the bizarre pleasure he took in trying to *épater* his peers. This was evident in his personal behavior and in his writing. He was liable to embarrass and irritate middle-class company by pouring his tea into a saucer and then slurping it up loudly, in "working-class" fashion. In 1940, with a candor that could be described as either stunning or mischievous, he wrote this:

> I should like to put it on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler. [Orwell then says that he would kill the Führer if he could, but] the fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him. . . . [His face] reproduces the expression of innumerable pictures of Christ crucified. . . . He is . . . the self-sacrificing hero who fights single-handed against impossible odds. . . . One feels, as with Napoleon, that he is fighting against destiny, that he *can't* win, and yet that somehow he deserves to.

This is not quoted in order to show that Orwell was being simply frivolous or (as T.R. Fyvel puts it) silly on this occasion. The passage from which it is taken is a slightly bemused exploration of personal *feelings*, and for all its apparent political reference, the quotation is not about politics at all. It has to do with a particular type of melodramatic hero, and points up the fact that melodrama was a very important part of Orwell's equipment as a writer.

Bernard Crick's recent biography of Orwell† offers the idiotic if fashionable opinion that Orwell was "a political thinker of genuine stature" and draws a totally daft parallel between *1984* and Hobbes's *Leviathan*. It is true that dissenters from behind the Iron Curtain have noted Orwell's insight into some details of Soviet tyranny, but *1984* is not an accurate or comprehen-

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* I cannot agree with Norman Podhoretz's belief that had he lived, Orwell would now be a neoconservative, because in Britain this would make him a Thatcherite Tory—something obviously impossible for such a man. He was too awkward, too contrary, too suspicious of any kind of aggressive leadership, particularly if it could—justly or unjustly—be blamed for something like today's high unemployment in Britain. I suspect he would indeed have shied away from what is now called the fascist Left, but that this would have landed him either on the left wing of Britain's new Social Democratic party, or among those like Denis Healey and Michael Foot who now cling to the shreds of the old Labor party. If Orwell's consistent sympathies are any guide, he would also have welcomed strongly the aim of suppressing today's nuclear weapons, though with much searing of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and other unilateralists for their anti-Western bias.

† *George Orwell: A Life*, Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1981.

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sive picture of how such a society and/or system maintains itself, or is likely to in the future. With his lack of feeling for the ambiguities of political reality, Orwell never grasped, for instance, why in the Soviet Union (as in Nazi Germany) there were and still are millions of "common people" living more or less undramatic lives, and supporting their government in a manner not quite explained away by cant about brainwashing or "prolefeed"; and that this support from the common man (supposed by Orwell to have a specially decent moral code)—and not a mere lust for power as such—is what made possible the staggering Soviet crimes of the 30's, the atrocities of Nazism during World War II, and sustains today's "socialist" regime in Russia, with its labor camps, psychiatric abuses, tortures, and secret police. The point, and the awful tragedy, is that the tyranny of a "centralized economy" (Orwell's words) does not *need* all the melodramatically creaking machinery of *1984*. The book is not a political treatise but a novel in the genre of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, though less easy to read.

Because it is now the fashion to despise Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous work, this comparison may startle or even offend some readers. They may have forgotten that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* intensified public feelings about slavery in much the same way *1984* did where totalitarianism was concerned. Both books contributed terms of political abuse which are still current, and Orwell himself wrote that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did "try to be serious and deal with the real world" and that it was still possible

parison with a major philosopher. Indeed, this is harmful because it makes (or tries to make) Orwell into something he was not, and so invites discredit.

THE sanest description of Orwell that I have seen was written by the American critic Isaac Rosenfeld in 1950, a few months after Orwell's death. He was, Rosenfeld wrote, "a writer in a small way" as distinct from a minor writer. If one looks behind the immense façade of symbolism which has been erected in front of Orwell's name and work, this is a fair picture of what he accomplished in his chosen profession. Despite the resonance of his polemics against tyranny, he was by no stretch of the imagination a major novelist or even a very good one, as he himself admitted. He published four novels before *Animal Farm*, none of them particularly distinguished or interesting, except where they touch upon his later political concerns. His essays on literature, on the artifacts of demotic culture (comic books, rude seaside postcards), and on the media are still absorbing and entertaining. As few other writers have done, he understood and approved of the popular appeal of "Good Bad Books," his literary equivalent of what Noël Coward once called the potency of cheap music. He wrote savagely and usefully upon the *aperçu* that ideological bigotry tends to breed an ugly form of euphemistic pleonasm; and in *1984* he satirized brilliantly the foul acronymic jargon which is now taken for granted in political discourse.

In his willingness to look squarely at and write about the odious

Left; this is undoubtedly *because* he never abandoned his commitment to the Left, aiming his harshest invective and satire at those closest to him who spoiled his own political hopes. But at its finest, his literary anger (which was an expression of deep personal conviction) transcended the parochial concerns of political parties, raging impartially against the cruelty and stupidity which human beings inflict upon each other in the name of "smelly little orthodoxies" and political salvation. This made him a superb polemicist and, near the end of his life, a satirist of some power and great popular appeal—but not a political philosopher.

In principle it is bad for a writer to be made into a hero. The role and the work invariably clash, and it is always the work which suffers. (We have enough well-known American examples.) In this respect Orwell has been, so to speak, posthumously unlucky, in that something of this effect still haunts him and his work, some thirty-three years after his death. And yet, though the attempts to exploit his image still continue, they should not be allowed to obscure his solid, if modest, achievement in literature. Besides the near-perfect fable *Animal Farm*, the essays I have mentioned, and some of his journalism, the nonfiction books (especially *Homage to Catalonia*, a vivid account of his Spanish Civil War service) can still be read with pleasure.

These works have, in addition to their political flavor, an unassuming charm and a curiously comforting quality—the same virtue that Orwell mentioned in his essay

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have grown beyond the mainly negative obsessions of *1984* to write something on the level of, say, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He had that type of temperament and talent. Whether his mantric professional boosters would have allowed these to survive is another question.

THIS brings me back to T.R. Fyvel's memoir. It is said that Fyvel knew Orwell as a friend. If that is true, this irksome little book is something in the nature of a betrayal of that friendship. This is not because it denigrates Orwell or his writing —though its portrait of Orwell himself is indifferent and blurred. On the contrary, it takes the standard quasi-hagiographic view of his late work; it also picks over ground already covered by Crick and others, with no new insight or comment to offer except stale and implausible dissent on minor details.

In the first part of the book Fyvel's speculation about Orwell's character is generally turgid, banal, not very enlightening, and given to annoying non sequiturs:

> Perhaps Orwell was ambivalent about the role in life he saw for himself at this time [when he went to Burma]. His second wife Sonia told me that not long before his death she asked him: "George, why not Oxbridge [i.e., Oxford or Cambridge University]? Why the Burma police?" Orwell replied that this was a long and complicated story and he would tell her some time. But he never got around to it.

The second part of the book, covering the years in which Fyvel actually knew Orwell (it reads more like the record of an acquaintance), seems to contain more material about Fyvel himself and his unoriginal political opinions than it does about the ostensible subject of the book. There is of course some anecdotal material about Orwell, his publisher Frederic Warburg, the literary ambience of the time, and a comment from Arthur Koestler that Orwell's imagination was "limited" when it came to Nazi atrocities. What there is of real interest in all this could (and should) have been contained in a magazine article of medium length.

Where the book does treat Orwell directly it is pocked with petty inaccuracies and judgments which are (when they do not echo the exaggerations of others) highly arguable. Thus Fyvel twice has Orwell signing himself "A.E. Blair" for his work on the *Adelphi* (one of the first magazines to publish his writing). His real name was Eric Arthur Blair, and in those days he signed himself "E.A. Blair," or "Eric Blair." The memoir claims that Orwell in his last year at Eton "with much heartache temporarily gave up the idea of being a writer." The source given for this assertion is the essay "Why I Write." It actually says: "I tried to abandon the idea, but I did so with the consciousness that I was outraging my true nature and that sooner or later I should have to settle down and write books." There is no mention of "heartache," and the idea was clearly not given up at all. Fyvel's claim that Orwell was a "gifted novelist" was contradicted by Orwell himself. As a writer he was not "gifted" to any great degree, but developed what talent he had by extremely hard and persistent work.

In a list of Orwell's targets for abuse in the 1930's, Fyvel names, in quotes, "Auden & Co.," as if this were Orwell's preferred term. He actually called them "the pansy Left," an expression avoided in this book, perhaps to make Orwell seem more "liberal" on this subject than he was. T.S. Eliot is said to have rejected *Animal Farm* when he was a director at Faber & Faber "because it was Trotskyist." Eliot's rather muddled letter of rejection mentions in passing that he took the point of view to be Trotskyist, but his specific objection to the book was that its effect was "simply one of negation." He also referred to "the political situation at the present time," suggesting that Faber, like other publishers, did not want to insult the Soviet Union while it was Britain's ally in World War II.

According to Fyvel, Orwell was "unimpressed" by the British fascist Oswald Mosley. In Bernard Crick's more accurate account, Orwell was very impressed by Mosley's demagogic flair for capturing a working-class audience while orating rubbish. Several of Fyvel's pages are devoted to inconclusive waffle around the subject of Orwell's anti-Semitism, together with a denial that Fyvel (as Orwell supposed) thought him anti-Semitic. It is a solecism Orwell himself would have been unlikely to commit; he knew well enough (as Fyvel must) that a casual anti-Semitism was normal among his class and generation and, as Crick makes very clear, Orwell was anti-Semitic in this way himself. Crick claims that Orwell "purged himself" of this prejudice, but the assertion is not very convincing.

FLYING in the face of much evidence, Fyvel attributes to Orwell a "special talent for recognizing the underlying trends of his age." This is of course precisely where Orwell failed most often and disastrously —predicting, for example, that World War II would bring fascism to Britain. In fact it brought the welfare state. In this and other predictions about "underlying trends" Orwell tended to lean too heavily upon the writings of James Burnham, having almost no original political ideas of his own to draw on. In this memoir there is also the mystifying affirmation that Orwell "judged everything on its own merits"; the most desultory survey of his writing (as opposed to his commentators) shows unmistakably that he saw and judged politics above all through thick anti-authoritarian lenses, and in terms of the bias of his class and generation of middle-class socialists —that is to say by a set of left-wing platitudes which are well summed up in a verse of the British music-hall song "She Was Poor But She was Honest":

> It's the same the whole world over,
> it's the poor wot gets the blame.
> It's the rich wot lives in clover,
> isn't it a bloody shame!

I should stress that this very simplicity was the great strength of Orwell's work. It gave his famous fable and much of his political

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polemic a power and emotional weight which greater sophistication would have watered down or destroyed. This is even true of the strain of irrationality which appeared now and then in his political thought and took him down strange byways. (He was known to remark, seriously, that "all tobacconists are fascists" and he regarded the Jews in the Middle East as colonialist "white men" who were oppressing the "colored" Arab population.)

My guess is that he would have been bemused to see his famous anti-utopia more fully embodied in Cambodia and (today) in Iran than in the Soviet Union. Of course he would have condemned the horrors, but given the patterns of his prejudice, it would not surprise me to see him put the blame for these grim examples on past oppression by "White Men," oil interests, etc.

NEVERTHELESS Orwell's surest literary and political flair was founded on a highly charged compassion for human suffering, plus what was once called a sense of decency. In the era when he was born and raised this formula had a meaning which was sharply if intuitively understood. I take it as an apparent sign that this understanding has decayed that so much overinflated praise, so much specious sanctification has been heaped upon Orwell and his work.

His greatest achievement was to focus in the popular mind a powerful instinctive hatred of tyranny and a sense of individual integrity, and to do so on a scale that is almost unique in our time. It is no discredit to him that this was made possible as much by the peculiar circumstances of the cold war as by his talent as a political writer. Whatever the circumstances, we have reason to be grateful to Orwell, and precisely for that reason we owe it to his memory to try and see clearly what he was—including eccentricities and contradictions—and not to magnify him into a plaster giant.

Fiction

Ann Beattie and the Hippoisie

Joseph Epstein

A FEW years ago I spent three days as a visiting writer on the campus of a liberal-arts college. The campus may have been small, the college in the hills of Ohio, but the English department, whose paid guest I was, ran an absolutely up-to-date operation. Among its members were a black, a Jew, an Asian woman, a homosexual, a combat-booted feminist, and a young woman whose socio-political provenance I did not immediately make out. When I inquired about this woman of the young teacher who had been assigned as my guide, a man who had himself recently been denied tenure—and to be denied tenure at such an institution is always a splendid inducement to speak plainly about it—he replied, "Oh, you mean Ruthie. Ruthie is from the 60's."

"From the 60's"—the locution, I thought, was most interesting. "From the 60's" sounds rather like from the Ukraine, or at least from another country. The 60's do seem like another country—a country of a different time, a different spirit, but a real country nonetheless. Certainly its denizens are readily enough identified. Take Ruthie. In her early thirties, she was dark, chunky, and wore her hair in a Caucasian version of an Afro. She carried a backpack over a coat made out of the hide of some unidentifiable beast, a coat with string fringes and badly in need of a cleaning. She drove a Volkswagen bug, yellow, its back seat cluttered with books, Kleenex boxes, a large bottle of jug wine. Car and woman had a packed look, as if they might, without too great notice, take off for either coast. She was self-declared as a poet. She might have been a character in an Ann Beattie story, although I hadn't yet read Ann Beattie, and so could not have known this.

I first heard of Ann Beattie, in fact, at another gathering of Ann Beattie characters, this one rather more prosperous. It was at a dinner given by a couple who were then living together. She was a historian who had recently been appointed to the directorship of a newly established woman's program at a Midwestern university. He had an unfinished dissertation at Harvard and worked at intellectual odd jobs in and around the social sciences: a bit of teaching, a bit of consulting, a bit of time put in with public agencies. The other

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people there that evening, my wife and myself excepted, had been students in universities in the middle and late 60's and early 70's, a cause among them for some pride. A good deal of energy went into the preparation of the dinner, and a great deal of talk—about the bread, the wine, the pasta, the fish, the pastry—accompanied its digestion. Former hippies at least in spirit, these people took kindly to bourgeois habits while retaining adversary points of view; "the hippoisie" was the name they only half-jokingly gave to themselves. For a number of people there that evening, Ann Beattie was their writer, and to call them Ann Beattie characters would not, I suspect, have hurt their feelings.

I HAVE now read Ann Beattie, her two novels and the three volumes of short stories that comprise her collected work to date. This is no small output for a writer of thirty-four. There are fifty of these stories. I believe I may have read some of them earlier when they first appeared in the *New Yorker*. I say "I believe" because I am not always certain. Reading them in her books I experienced a sense of *déja lu*. Have I read them before, or have I instead read stories like them, for I am told that Ann Beattie already has a number of imitators? (One line of dialogue I do clearly remember having read earlier. It runs, "Name me one thing more pathetic than a fag with a cold," and is uttered by a homosexual.) Ann Beattie's novels and stories do make an effect: they depress, even when they have what ought to be happy endings. Yet they somehow do not stay with one; they seem to seem to slide off the page; one story melts into another, and the whole finally dissolves in the mind, like one of those small blue pills some of Ann Beattie's characters require to get through the day, a downer.

As I read through story after story of Miss Beattie's, I asked myself why these stories—stories written by a writer with a true command of prose style and a deadly eye for right details—were at once vaguely depressing and distinctly forgettable? I have, for example, been reading Miss Beattie's latest collection of stories, *The Burning House*,* and turning back to the book's table of contents I notice that I cannot connect stories to titles. Was "Afloat" about the woman about to have a child with a man to whom she is not married? Is "Playback" about the young man who works for an advertising agency? Is "Desire" the story in which everyone gets stoned, or in which the woman's husband leaves her for another man? Beats me.

As for the depression, well, one is used to depression in modern fiction, which provides many laughs but very few smiles. One is used to it in traditional literature, too. *Anna Karenina* comes down with a bump. But however depressed that great book leaves you, you do feel you have got something for your sadness. The depression that comes with reading Ann Beattie is of a different order, and not just because she isn't Tolstoy. It is depression at reading about the sheer hopelessness of her characters' lives; from these lives, they learn nothing and neither do we. Nor, by design, are we supposed to. In one of the stories in *The Burning House* it is said of a six-year-old girl: "She used to like stories to end with a moral, like fairy tales, but now she thinks that's kid's stuff."

MISS BEATTIE has a real subject, and a highly interesting one. Her subject is the fate of her own generation, the generation that was in college and graduate school in the late 60's and early 70's. This generation, as everyone knows, grew up in the shadow of the Vietnam war, and it was the first to have a free hand with sex and drugs, to know splendor both in and on the grass. I recall, in the middle 60's, a *Partisan Review* symposium, those occasions on which intellectuals are invited to say things they are sure to regret later, in which nearly all the participants had a good word for the young. Everyone agreed that this was to be a generation of great promise. The members of this generation felt that they were promising, too, but they also felt that they were, in some odd and never quite defined way, promised. Promised what? Because of their own intrinsic superiority, moral and intellectual, they felt they were promised a freer and richer and happier life than any known before here in America and possibly on earth.

But the world of the 60's ended neither with a bang nor with a whimper but, it would seem from Ann Beattie's fiction, with an album. "Rachel cried when she heard Dylan's *Self-Portrait* album, because, to her, that meant everything was over." In the story "The Lawn Party" from the collection *Secrets and Surprises* (1979) we read: "When Janis Joplin died Elizabeth cried for six days." A character in Miss Beattie's first novel, *Chilly Scenes of Winter* (1978), remarks of his sister: "You could be happy, too, Sam, if you were nineteen in 1975, and you hadn't had your eyes opened in the 60's." In the same novel another character says: "Everybody's so pathetic. What is it? Is it just the end of the 60's?" And a character in *Falling in Place* (1980), Miss Beattie's most recent novel, remarks: "There were a lot of things for which graduate school did not prepare you." One of them being, the reader is tempted to answer, the rest of life.

About all of Ann Beattie's fiction there is something of an after-party atmosphere. Her stories begin after the 60's binge is done and gone. No mention is made of the Democratic convention of 1968, of the marches and protests, of any other of the momentous happenings of those years. In one of her stories a maimed Vietnam veteran appears, in another a woman's brother is mentioned as having been killed in Vietnam, and in yet another a veteran is said to be unable to stop talking about Vietnam. Yet Miss Beattie does not hammer away at Vietnam or speak of politics except obliquely, though a foul air of things gone wrong hovers about her characters and their world. Anxiety, disappointment, despair, these are the pollutants in the Beattie atmosphere, and both characters and readers are made to choke on them.

* Random House, 256 pp., $12.95.

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Already in *Distortions* (1976), her first book of stories, the general pattern of Ann Beattie's fiction is set. *Distortions* is very much a young writer's book, and hence rather more experimental than the more mature Ann Beattie's fiction will be. The book's opening story is about a marriage of dwarfs. Another story is done in short takes, rather like blackout sketches. "Wesley has gaps between his teeth," one such take begins; "Janie Regis' hair is all different colors," the next one picks up. Another experimental story is entitled "It's Just Another Day in Big Bear City, California," a title which is almost a story in itself. But the less experimental Ann Beattie's stories are, the better. Taken by themselves, some of the straighter stories are quite impressive—"Wolf Dreams," for example, written when Miss Beattie was only twenty-six. Nearly all the stories show a high degree of professional polish. The dialogue always feels right; the interior monologue, too, seems on target. The flat style, a Beattie trademark, is already in use in *Distortions*, as in this opening passage from a not very good story entitled "Hale Hardy and the Amazing Animal Woman":

> Hale Hardy went to college because he couldn't think of anything better to do, and he quit because he couldn't see any reason to stay. He lasted one and a half years. He did not exactly quit; he was thrown out. When that happened he went to visit his sister Mary, who was living with another girl, Paula, who was being supported by some dude. Hale didn't know the dude's name, or why he was supporting her, or why his sister was living there. He just went.

That passage reveals more than the style of Miss Beattie's fiction; it reveals the peculiar will-lessness of her characters. Passive agents, they do not act but are acted upon. "The important thing," one character in a story in *Distortions* advises another, "was to know when to give up." Here is a note Ann Beattie has held through all her books. The first story in *The Burning House* ends thus: "What Ruth had known all along: what will happen can't be stopped. Aim for grace."

Amazing grace. If grace is what Ann Beattie's characters aim for, very few achieve it. But then they don't aim very carefully. Not much in life interests them. Politics doesn't—though they are all convinced that America is hopeless—neither conventional politics nor emotional politics. "There aren't any answers," says a Beattie character. "That's what I've got against woman's liberation. Nothing personal." Although people have love affairs, once a couple moves in together, the end is in sight. Sex is no big deal. Miss Beattie rarely describes it. Detailed description tends to be reserved for getting stoned. Few relationships endure. Work is pointless. Things fall apart; the center, hell, in Ann Beattie's fiction not even the fringes seem to hold.

In a diary entry of 1945 Noël Coward wrote: "Read Elizabeth Bowen's new short stories; exquisite writing but a trifle too inconclusive." Perhaps it is well that Coward did not live to read Ann Beattie's stories. Miss Beattie specializes in the inconclusive; inconclusiveness, in her fiction, is quite deliberate. It is part of her method. E. M. Forster once wrote that the king died and then the queen died is a story, but the king died and then the queen died of grief is a plot. Miss Beattie does not go in much for plot. Her work is, in some respects, anti-plot. In the story "Greenwich Time" in *The Burning House* a man is at the house of his former wife and her current husband; the house was one he once lived in with his wife. Now he is alone in it with his young son and the maid. His ex-wife and her husband are late—unusually late. Generally they are home long before now. It is worrisome. Yet why they are late, whether they will eventually arrive home safely, these are things we never learn. Instead, "Greenwich Time" ends with the maid telling the man that, though he may have been dispossessed from this house, she is still his friend. "Then they stood there, still and quiet, as if the walls of the room were mountains and their words might fly against them." That's it. End of story. Cut and print that (the *New Yorker* did, originally).

Chekhov instructed that if a gun appears on the wall in a scene in the first act of a play, before the play is over the gun will be fired. Not in Ann Beattie's stories; more likely the wall will disappear. This is again by way of saying how little interested she is in plot in the conventional sense. What her fiction strives to achieve is not development of character, accounts of motivation, or moral resolution—no, what she strives to achieve are states of feeling. This she often succeeds in doing. Thus in a story such as "A Reasonable Man," from the collection *Secrets and Surprises*, she can show what a woman feels who is mismarried and on the edge of nervous breakdown—loneliness, frustration, anxiety, quiet terror—and you will feel it, too. Attempting to capture states of feeling, as opposed to doing so within the construction of careful plots, is of course a great aid to composition, which helps explain why Miss Beattie has been so prolific. What is less clear is why the states of feeling her stories reveal are always those connected with sadness and loss.

Another problem arises: the states of feeling Ann Beattie strives for, workable though they may be within the brief compass of a short story, are not sufficient to keep a longer work afloat. This is why her novels, in my view, sink. The first of them, *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, is about two young men, veterans of the 60's, who are now in their late twenties. One is a Phi Beta Kappa who hasn't the money to go to law school, so instead has to settle for a job selling men's jackets. The other has a government job that bores him stiff, a mother who goes in and out of mental hospitals, and a love for a woman with whom he had an affair but who is married to someone else and about whom he cannot stop thinking. The novel's title is also the title of a song by a group called the New Lost City Ramblers and Cousin Emmy.

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The winter in question is that of 1974-75, the scene of such action as there is Washington, D.C. Very little sense of the city of Washington comes through. The characters are not described elaborately. What does come through, though, is that the characters in this novel are under a malaise. It is almost as if they had come back from a war, except they haven't. " 'The goddam 60's,' Charles says. 'How'd we end up like this.' " What, exactly, went wrong? A number of things, it turns out. The country, the United States, seems partly to blame: it provides no good work, it throws up characters like Richard Nixon, it is killing off its wildlife. Parents, partially, are to blame as well; at least most parents in Ann Beattie's fiction, as in *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, have troubles that they seem to pass on to their children: divorce, alcoholism, madness. The old dreams, from Norman Rockwell to the legend of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, are dried up and dead. Things are grim. "Unhappiness," said the young Henry James, "is a disease," and Ann Beattie's characters have caught it.

Perhaps I make this sound slightly grimmer than it is. Miss Beattie has a sly sense of humor. From time to time she will toss an interesting flake into her fiction, such as, in *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, the young woman who is making up her mind to be a lesbian, and who says of a friend in California: "She claimed she screwed Peter Fonda on the kitchen floor in an all-night health food restaurant, but I don't believe it." The novel's hero thinks perhaps he ought to move to California but then concludes that, at twenty-seven, "he is too old for the West Coast." The two principal characters in the book have longish exchanges—conversations are not quite what they are—about food, their pasts, their futures, that are Beckett-like in their comic hopelessness.

And yet a dark doleful cloud hangs over everything. At the close of *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, the married woman whom the hero of the novel loves, and about whom he ruminates at great boring length, leaves her husband and returns to our hero. "A story with a happy ending," he says. But that seems unlikely. Why mightn't she leave him again? Why mightn't he soon grow tired of her? Why not any of a thousand possibilities—in fiction that is so weightless, where events occur without cause and life has no lessons to teach, anything can happen. If Ann Beattie's fiction makes a single point it is this: the one thing you can depend on is that there is nothing you can depend on.

"It's selling you such a bill of goods to tell you that you should get married and have a family and be secure. Jesus! What your own family will do to you." So says a woman in *Falling in Place*, mother of three, whose husband, an advertising executive of forty, is having an affair with a young woman of the 60's generation currently resident in a small apartment along Columbus Avenue. *Falling in Place* is Ann Beattie's first novel about suburban, upper-middle-class family life, and that life—surprise, surprise—turns out to be hell. Not that the book is exclusively suburban. The cast of characters includes another assortment of 60's casualties. Among them are dropouts from Bard College; pilgrims from the West Coast; a drug dealer worried about Three Mile Island ("No way drugs explain why this is a bad world"); and a woman graduate student teaching high school in the summer who " was born the year *Howl* came out, but she still felt sure that she was one of the people Ginsberg was talking about." In Miss Beattie's fiction there are, finally, two classes of people—those who came of age in the 60's and those who didn't, and those who did are better.

The interesting characters in *Falling in Place*, however, are the children. The advertising man and his wife have three: Mary, a fifteen-year-old who is mad for Peter Frampton and who responds to everything she doesn't care for—which covers a great deal—with the phrase, Suck-o; John Joel, her younger brother, detached, a compulsive eater, who spends a lot of time reading violent comics or perched in a tree in his yard; Brad, the baby, who lives with his grandmother. Their father wants to leave their mother, but cannot quite bring himself to do so. A friend at his advertising agency tells him, "The real killer was when you married the wrong person but had the right children." Mary and John Joel, it must be said, are not the right children. They loathe each other, and such denouement as the novel provides comes about when John Joel, quite by accident, shoots and wounds his sister.

This act forces the hand of their father, who can barely grasp what he feels to be the enormity of it, and who because of it determines to leave his wife at last. Only—and this seems to me a decisive only—he, the father, does not know that the shooting was an accident. He acts on incomplete knowledge, and Miss Beattie, in the course of the novel, sees no need to complete it for him. That characters get things wrong, that their vision of events is more than a little occluded, none of this seems to matter. The world, Ann Beattie seems to be saying, goes sourly on its way. Things fall in place.

I say the world goes sourly on its way, but some might argue that *Falling in Place* is a relatively sunny novel. The father of these children goes off with his lady-friend. His wife, without him, will have a better chance to pick up the pieces of her own shattered life. His children, being young, presumably will pull themselves together. Another couple in the novel—an Abbie Hoffman type minus the genius for publicity, and the graduate student born the year *Howl* was published—settle in after troublous days. Near the novel's close, a young man, a practicing magician, remarks: "It's a rotten world. No wonder people want answers. No wonder they want to have parties and get distracted. Sometimes something nice happens, though."

But not very often. How could it in a world seen through such dark glasses? As *Chilly Scenes of Winter* finishes off work, *Falling in Place* does the job on family. The surrounding culture provides no re-

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lief; there menace chiefly lurks. Join the magician in *Falling in Place* in his interior monologue: "He knew the real world was the Pentagon . . . and he was at least thankful that he was not involved in the real world." Cop a thought from the advertising man in the same novel: "It was true that someone could dress very conventionally and still be evil: Nixon with his jacket and tie walking on the beach, for example." (What would so many contemporary American novelists do without good old Dick Nixon still there to kick around?) Without work, without family, without support in the culture, what, really, is left for knowing people but such pleasure as can be taken on the run and the hope for some measure of personal salvation through awareness?

Awareness of what? Awareness, I believe Ann Beattie wants us to know, of what a dreadful crock life is. Philosophy resides in composition, and the method by which Miss Beattie creates her stories and novels tells much about their author's view of the world. There is, to begin with, the causelessness in her fiction. Her characters are seldom allowed to know why things happen as they do, and without such knowledge there cannot be any deliberate action. It is for this reason that almost every Ann Beattie character is so passive and, finally, so depressing. What, after all, can be more depressing than to be certain that one has no control whatsoever over one's destiny? Destiny, in the grand sense, simply does not exist in Miss Beattie's fiction. Her characters neither know about it nor seem to care about it. All that they do know is that they are living in the shade of a malaise; since this malaise is rather vague, so are the reasons for their unhappiness. Can it be, one sometimes wonders, that the reason they are so unhappy is that they do not feel happy enough—that they feel life has reneged on its promises?

What is more, as they grow older, it continues to do so. Certainly, Miss Beattie's fiction grows more and more cheerless. The first two stories in her latest collection, *The Burning House*, bring forth a brain-damaged child and a brain-damaged adult. The word cancer pops into the discussion fairly regularly. The intake of pills seems greater: yellow Valium, blue Valium, green Donnatal, reds. In one story a child is read to from the works of R. D. Laing, and in another a woman thinks, "Children seem older now." Many is the miscarriage and no fewer the abortions. Meanwhile, the 60's themselves begin to fade: Dennis Hopper—the usual prizes for readers who remember that name—puts in a cameo appearance in one story in *The Burning House*, and in another, set in Virginia, it is said that "Art Garfunkel used to have a place out there." People sit around and tell where they were when John F. Kennedy was shot. But I had better stop—this is beginning to get me down.

WHAT does Ann Beattie think of all this? I happened to note that *The Burning House* is copyright under the name Pity & Irony, Inc. I don't know if that denotes a tax shelter or a self-regarding literary criticism. Miss Beattie pities her characters, true, but in the end her irony does not go very far. In her fiction it is not always easy to distinguish author from subject, dancer from dance. Her identification with her characters is nearly complete. In the biographical note to *The Burning House* she is made to sound like nothing so much as one of them: "She occasionally teaches writing at the University of Virginia and lives, with her dog, in New York City." Ann Beattie is a generation writer, and that is a severe limitation. Milan Kundera, in his novel *The Joke*, has one of his characters say: "The very thought of a generation mentality (the pride of the herd) has always repelled me." But a more severe limitation is that, while she knows a good deal about life's phenomena, she chooses to deny life's significance. In so doing, she ends by denying significance to her own work, for literature is finally about the significance and not the phenomena of life. At this point in her career, Ann Beattie is the chief purveyor of her own generation's leading clichés—the L. L. Bean of what passes for 60's existentialism.

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The Gandhi Nobody Knows

Richard Grenier

I HAD the singular honor of attending an early private screening of *Gandhi* with an audience of invited guests from the National Council of Churches. At the end of the three-hour movie there was hardly, as they say, a dry eye in the house. When the lights came up I fell into conversation with a young woman who observed, reverently, that Gandhi's last words were "Oh, God," causing me to remark regretfully that the real Gandhi had not spoken in English, but had cried, *Hai Rama!* ("Oh, Rama"). Well, Rama was just Indian for God, she replied, at which I felt compelled to explain that, alas, Rama, collectively with his three half-brothers, represented the seventh reincarnation of Vishnu. The young woman, who seemed to have been under the impression that Hinduism was Christianity under another name, sensed somehow that she had fallen on an uncongenial spirit, and the conversation ended.

At a dinner party shortly afterward, a friend of mine, who had visited India many times and even gone to the trouble of learning Hindi, objected strenuously that the picture of Gandhi that emerges in the movie is grossly inaccurate, omitting, as one of many examples, that when Gandhi's wife lay dying of pneumonia and British doctors insisted that a shot of penicillin would save her, Gandhi refused to have this alien medicine injected in her body and simply let her die. (It must be noted that when Gandhi contracted malaria shortly afterward he accepted for himself the alien medicine quinine, and that when he had appendicitis he allowed British doctors to perform on him the alien outrage of an appendectomy.) All of this produced a wistful mooing from an editor of a major newspaper and a recalcitrant, "But still. . . ." I would prefer to explicate things more substantial than a wistful mooing, but there is little doubt it meant the editor in question felt that even if the real Mohandas K. Gandhi had been different from the Gandhi of the movie it would have been *nice* if he had been like the movie-Gandhi, and that presenting him in this admittedly false manner was beautiful, stirring, and perhaps socially beneficial.

An important step in the canonization of this movie-Gandhi was taken by the New York Film Critics Circle, which not only awarded the picture its prize as best film of 1982, but awarded Ben Kingsley, who played Gandhi (a remarkably good performance), its prize as best actor of the year. But I cannot believe for one second that these awards were made independently of the film's content—which, not to put too fine a point on it, is an all-out appeal for pacifism—or in anything but the most shameful ignorance of the historical Gandhi.

Now it does not bother me that Shakespeare omitted from his *King John* the signing of the Magna Charta—by far the most important event in John's reign. All Shakespeare's "histories" are strewn with errors and inventions. Shifting to the cinema and to more recent times, it is hard for me to work up much indignation over the fact that neither Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* nor his *October* recounts historical episodes in anything like the manner in which they actually occurred (the famous march of the White Guards down the steps at Odessa—artistically one of the greatest sequences in film history—simply did not take place). As we draw closer to the present, however, the problem becomes much more difficult. If the Soviet Union were to make an artistically wondrous film about the entry of Russian tanks into Prague in 1968 (an event I happened to witness), and show them being greeted with flowers by a grateful populace, the Czechs dancing in the streets with joy, I do not guarantee that I would maintain my serene aloofness. A great deal depends on whether the historical events represented in a movie are intended to be taken as substantially true, and also on whether —separated from us by some decades or occurring yesterday—they are seen as having a direct bearing on courses of action now open to us.

On my second viewing of *Gandhi,* this time at a public showing at the end of the Christmas season, I happened to leave the theater behind three teenage girls, apparently from one of Manhattan's fashionable private schools. "Gandhi was pretty much an FDR," one opined, astonishing me almost as much by her breezy use of initials to invoke a President who died almost a quarter-century before her birth as by the stupefying nature of the comparison. "But he was a religious figure, too," corrected one of her friends, adding somewhat smugly, "It's not in our historical tradition to honor spiritual leaders." Since her schoolteachers had clearly not led her to consider Jonathan Edwards and Roger Williams as spiritual leaders, let alone Joseph Smith and William Jennings Bryan, the intimation seemed to be that we are a society with poorer spiritual values than, let's say, India. There can be no question, in any event, that the girls felt they had just been

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shown the historical Gandhi—an attitude shared by Ralph Nader, who at last account had seen the film three times. Nader has conceived the most extraordinary notion that Gandhi's symbolic flouting of the British salt tax was a "consumer issue" which he later expanded into the wider one of Indian independence. A modern parallel to Gandhi's program of home-spinning and home-weaving, another "consumer issue" says Nader, might be the use of solar energy to free us from the "giant multinational oil corporations."

As IT happens, the government of India openly admits to having provided one-third of the financing of *Gandhi* out of state funds, straight out of the national treasury—and after close study of the finished product I would not be a bit surprised to hear that it was 100 percent. If Pandit Nehru is portrayed flatteringly in the film, one must remember that Nehru himself took part in the initial story conferences (he originally wanted Gandhi to be played by Alec Guinness) and that his daughter Indira Gandhi is, after all, Prime Minister of India (though no relation to Mohandas Gandhi). The screenplay was checked and rechecked by Indian officials at every stage, often by the Prime Minister herself, with close consultations on plot and even casting. If the movie contains a particularly poisonous portrait of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, the Indian reply, I suppose, would be that if the Pakistanis want an attractive portrayal of Jinnah let them pay for their own movie. A friend of mine, highly sophisticated in political matters but innocent about film-making, declared that *Gandhi* should be preceded by the legend: *The following film is a paid political advertisement by the government of India.*

Gandhi, then, is a large, pious, historical morality tale centered on a saintly, sanitized Mahatma Gandhi cleansed of anything too embarrassingly Hindu (the word "caste" is not mentioned from one end of the film to the other) and, indeed, of most of the rest of Gandhi's life, much of which would drastically diminish his saintliness in Western eyes. There is little to indicate that the India of today has followed Gandhi's precepts in almost nothing. There is little, in fact, to indicate that India is even India. The spectator realizes the scene is the Indian subcontinent because there are thousands of extras dressed in dhotis and saris. The characters go about talking in these quaint Peter Sellers accents. We have occasional shots of India's holy poverty, holy hovels, some landscapes, many of them photographed quite beautifully, for those who like travelogues. We have a character called Lord Mountbatten (India's last Viceroy); a composite American journalist (assembled from Vincent Sheehan, William L. Shirer, Louis Fischer, and straight fiction); a character called simply "Viceroy" (presumably another composite); an assemblage of Gandhi's Indian followers under the name of one of them (Patel); and of course Nehru.

I sorely missed the fabulous Annie Besant, that English clergyman's wife, turned atheist, turned Theosophist, turned Indian nationalist, who actually became president of the Indian National Congress and had a terrific falling out with Gandhi, becoming his fierce opponent. And if the producers felt they had to work in a cameo role for an American star to add to the film's appeal in the United States, it is positively embarrassing that they should have brought in the photographer Margaret Bourke-White, a person of no importance whatever in Gandhi's life and a role Candice Bergen plays with a repellant unctuousness. If the film-makers had been interested in drama and not hagiography, it is hard to see how they could have resisted the awesome confrontation between Gandhi and, yes, Margaret Sanger. For the two did meet. Now *there* was a meeting of East and West, and *may the better person win!* (She did. Margaret Sanger argued her views on birth control with such vigor that Gandhi had a nervous breakdown.)

I cannot honestly say I had any reasonable expectation that the film would show scenes of Gandhi's pretty teenage girl followers fighting "hysterically" (the word was used) for the honor of sleeping naked with the Mahatma and cuddling the nude septuagenarian in their arms. (Gandhi was "testing" his vow of chastity in order to gain moral strength for his mighty struggle with Jinnah.) When told there was a man named Freud who said that, despite his declared intention, Gandhi might actually be *enjoying* the caresses of the naked girls, Gandhi continued, unperturbed. Nor, frankly, did I expect to see Gandhi giving daily enemas to all the young girls in his ashrams (his daily greeting was, "Have you had a good bowel movement this morning, sisters?"), nor see the girls giving him *his* daily enema. Although Gandhi seems to have written less about home rule for India than he did about enemas, and excrement, and latrine cleaning ("The bathroom is a temple. It should be so clean and inviting that anyone would enjoy eating there"), I confess such scenes might pose problems for a Western director.

Gandhi, therefore, the film, this paid political advertisement for the government of India, is organized around three axes: (1) Anti-racism —all men are equal regardless of race, color, creed, etc.; (2) anti-colonialism, which in present terms translates as support for the Third World, including, most eminently, India; (3) nonviolence, presented as an absolutist pacifism. There are other, secondary precepts and subheadings. Gandhi is portrayed as the quintessence of tolerance ("I am a Hindu and a Muslim and a Christian and a Jew"), of basic friendliness to Britain ("The British have been with us for a long time and when they leave we want them to leave as friends"), of devotion to his wife and family. His vow of chastity is represented as something selfless and holy, rather like the celibacy of the Catholic clergy. But, above all, Gandhi's life and teachings are presented as having great import for us today. We must learn from Gandhi.

I propose to demonstrate that the film grotesquely distorts both Gandhi's life and character to the point that it is nothing more than a pious fraud, and a fraud of the most

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egregious kind. Hackneyed Indian falsehoods such as that "the British keep trying to break India up" (as if Britain didn't give India a unity it had never enjoyed in history), or that the British *created* Indian poverty (a poverty which had not only existed since time immemorial but had been considered holy), almost pass unnoticed in the tide of adulation for our fictional saint. Gandhi, admittedly, being a devout Hindu, was far more self-contradictory than most public men. Sanskrit scholars tell me that flat self-contradiction is even considered an element of "Sanskrit rhetoric." Perhaps it is thought to show profundity.

GANDHI rose early, usually at three-thirty, and before his first bowel movement (during which he received visitors, although possibly not Margaret Bourke-White) he spent two hours in meditation, listening to his "inner voice." Now Gandhi was an extremely vocal individual, and in addition to spending an hour each day in vigorous walking, another hour spinning at his primitive spinning wheel, another hour at further prayers, another hour being massaged nude by teenage girls, and many hours deciding such things as affairs of state, he produced a quite unconscionable number of articles and speeches and wrote an average of sixty letters a day. All considered, it is not really surprising that his inner voice said different things to him at different times. Despising consistency and never checking his earlier statements, and yet inhumanly obstinate about his position at any given moment, Gandhi is thought by some Indians today (according to V.S. Naipaul) to have been so erratic and unpredictable that he may have delayed Indian independence for twenty-five years.

For Gandhi was an extremely difficult man to work with. He had no partners, only disciples. For members of his ashrams, he dictated every minute of their days, and not only every morsel of food they should eat but when they should eat it. Without ever having heard of a protein or a vitamin, he considered himself an expert on diet, as on most things, and was constantly experimenting. Once when he fell ill, he was found to have been living on a diet of ground-nut butter and lemon juice; British doctors called it malnutrition. And Gandhi had even greater confidence in his abilities as a "nature doctor," prescribing obligatory cures for his ashramites, such as dried cow-dung powder and various concoctions containing cow dung (the cow, of course, being sacred to the Hindu). And to those he really loved he gave enemas—but again, alas, not to Margaret Bourke-White. Which is too bad, really. For admiring Candice Bergen's work as I do, I would have been most interested in seeing how she would have experienced this beatitude. The scene might have lived in film history.

There are 400 biographies of Gandhi, and his writings run to 80 volumes, and since he lived to be seventy-nine, and rarely fell silent, there are, as I have indicated, quite a few inconsistencies. The authors of the present movie even acknowledge in a little-noticed opening title that they have made a film only true to Gandhi's "spirit." For my part, I do not intend to pick through Gandhi's writings to make him look like Attila the Hun (although the thought is tempting), but to give a fair, weighted balance of his views, laying stress above all on his actions, and on what he told other men to do when the time for action had come.

Anti-racism: the reader will have noticed that in the present-day community of nations South Africa is a pariah. So it is an absolutely amazing piece of good fortune that Gandhi, born the son of the Prime Minister of a tiny Indian principality and received as an attorney at the bar of the Middle Temple in London, should have begun his climb to greatness as a member of the small Indian community in, precisely, South Africa. Natal, then a separate colony, wanted to limit Indian immigration and, as part of the government program, ordered Indians to carry identity papers (an action not without similarities to measures under consideration in the U.S. today to control illegal immigration). The film's lengthy opening sequences are devoted to Gandhi's leadership in the fight against Indians carrying their identity papers (burning their registration cards), with for good measure Gandhi being expelled from the first-class section of a railway train, and Gandhi being asked by whites to step off the sidewalk. This inspired young Indian leader calls, in the film, for interracial harmony, for people to "live together."

Now the time is 1893, and Gandhi is a "caste" Hindu, and from one of the higher castes. Although, later, he was to call for improving the lot of India's Untouchables, he was not to have any serious misgivings about the fundamentals of the caste system for about another thirty years, and even then his doubts, to my way of thinking, were rather minor. In the India in which Gandhi grew up, and had only recently left, some castes could enter the courtyards of certain Hindu temples, while others could not. Some castes were forbidden to use the village well. Others were compelled to live outside the village, still others to leave the road at the approach of a person of higher caste and perpetually to call out, giving warning, so that no one would be polluted by their proximity. The endless intricacies of Hindu caste by-laws varied somewhat region by region, but in Madras, where most South African Indians were from, while a Nayar could pollute a man of higher caste only by touching him, Kammalans polluted at a distance of 24 feet, toddy drawers at 36 feet, Pulayans and Cherumans at 48 feet, and beef-eating Paraiyans at 64 feet. All castes and the thousands of sub-castes were forbidden, needless to say, to marry, eat, or engage in social activity with any but members of their own group. In Gandhi's native Gujarat a caste Hindu who had been polluted by touch had to perform extensive ritual ablutions or purify himself by drinking a holy beverage composed of milk, whey, and (what else?) cow dung.

Low-caste Hindus, in short, suf-

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fered humiliations in their native India compared to which the carrying of identity cards in South Africa was almost trivial. In fact, Gandhi, to his credit, was to campaign strenuously in his later life for the reduction of caste barriers in India —a campaign almost invisible in the movie, of course, conveyed in only two glancing references, leaving the audience with the officially sponsored if historically astonishing notion that racism was introduced into India by the British. To present the Gandhi of 1893, a conventional caste Hindu, fresh from caste-ridden India where a Paraiyan could pollute at 64 feet, as the champion of interracial equalitariansim is one of the most brazen hypocrisies I have ever encountered in a serious movie.

The film, moreover, does not give the slightest hint as to Gandhi's attitude toward blacks, and the viewers of *Gandhi* would naturally suppose that, since the future Great Soul opposed South African discrimination against Indians, he would also oppose South African discrimination against black people. But this is not so. While Gandhi, in South Africa, fought furiously to have Indians recognized as loyal subjects of the British empire, and to have them enjoy the full rights of Englishmen, he had no concern for blacks whatever. In fact, during one of the "Kaffir Wars" he volunteered to organize a brigade of Indians to put down a Zulu rising, and was decorated himself for valor under fire.

For, yes, Gandhi (Sergeant-Major Gandhi) was awarded Victoria's coveted War Medal. Throughout most of his life Gandhi had the most inordinate admiration for British soldiers, their sense of duty, their discipline and stoicism in defeat (a trait he emulated himself). He marveled that they retreated with heads high, like victors. There was even a time in his life when Gandhi, hardly to be distinguished from Kipling's Gunga Din, wanted nothing so much as to be a Soldier of the Queen. Since this is not in keeping with the "spirit" of Gandhi, as decided by Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi, it is naturally omitted from the movie.

Anti-colonialism: as almost always with historical films, even those more honest than *Gandhi,* the historical personage on which the movie is based is not only more complex but more interesting than the character shown on the screen. During his entire South African period, and for some time after, until he was about fifty, Gandhi was nothing more or less than an imperial loyalist, claiming for Indians the rights of Englishmen but unshakably loyal to the crown. He supported the empire ardently in no fewer than three wars: the Boer War, the "Kaffir War," and, with the most extreme zeal, World War I. If Gandhi's mind were of the modern European sort, this would seem to suggest that his later attitude toward Britain was the product of unrequited love: he had wanted to be an Englishman; Britain had rejected him and his people; very well then, they would have their own country. But this would imply a point of "agonizing reappraisal," a moment when Gandhi's most fundamental political beliefs were reexamined and, after the most bitter soul-searching, repudiated. But I have studied the literature and cannot find this moment of bitter soul-searching. Instead, listening to his "inner voice" (which in the case of divines of all countries often speaks in the tones of holy opportunism), Gandhi simply, tranquilly, without announcing any sharp break, set off in a new direction.

It should be understood that it is unlikely Gandhi ever truly conceived of "becoming" an Englishman, first, because he was a Hindu to the marrow of his bones, and also, perhaps, because his democratic instincts were really quite weak. He was a man of the most extreme, autocratic temperament, tyrannical, unyielding even regarding things he knew nothing about, totally intolerant of all opinions but his own. He was, furthermore, in the highest degree reactionary, permitting in India no change in the relationship between the feudal lord and his peasants or servants, the rich and the poor. In his *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi,* the best and least hagiographic of the full-length studies, Robert Payne, although admiring Gandhi greatly, explains Gandhi's "new direction" on his return to India from South Africa as follows:

> He spoke in generalities, but he was searching for a single cause, a single hard-edged task to which he would devote the remaining years of his life. He wanted to repeat his triumph in South Africa on Indian soil. He dreamed of assembling a small army of dedicated men around him, issuing stern commands and leading them to some almost unobtainable goal.

Gandhi, in short, was a leader looking for a cause. He found it, of course, in home rule for India and, ultimately, in independence.

We are therefore presented with the seeming anomaly of a Gandhi who, in Britain when war broke out in August 1914, instantly contacted the War Office, swore that he would stand by England in its hour of need, and created the Indian Volunteer Corps, which he might have commanded if he hadn't fallen ill with pleurisy. In 1915, back in India, he made a memorable speech in Madras in which he proclaimed, "I discovered that the British empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love. . . ." In early 1918, as the war in Europe entered its final crisis, he wrote to the Viceroy of India, "I have an idea that if I become your recruiting agent-in-chief, I might rain men upon you," and he proclaimed in a speech in Kheda that the British "love justice; they have shielded men against oppression." Again, he wrote to the Viceroy, "I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the empire at this critical moment. . . ." To some of his pacifist friends, who were horrified, Gandhi replied by appealing to the *Bhagavad Gita* and to the endless wars recounted in the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* adding further to the pacifists' horror by declaring that Indians "have always been warlike, and the finest hymn composed by Tulsidas in praise of Rama gives the first place to his ability to strike down the enemy."

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This was in contradiction to the interpretation of sacred Hindu scriptures Gandhi had offered on earlier occasions (and would offer later), which was that they did not recount military struggles but spiritual struggles; but, unusual for him, he strove to find some kind of synthesis. "I do not say, 'Let us go and kill the Germans,' " Gandhi explained. "I say, 'Let us go and die for the sake of India and the empire.' " And yet within two years, the time having come for *swaraj* (home rule), Gandhi's inner voice spoke again, and, the leader having found his cause, Gandhi proclaimed resoundingly: "The British empire today represents Satanism, and they who love God can afford to have no love for Satan."

The idea of *swaraj*, originated by others, crept into Gandhi's mind gradually. With a fair amount of winding about, Gandhi, roughly, passed through three phases. First, he was entirely pro-British, and merely wanted for Indians the rights of Englishmen (as he understood them). Second, he was still pro-British, but with the belief that, having proved their loyalty to the empire, Indians would be granted some degree of *swaraj*. Third, as the home-rule movement gathered momentum, it was the *swaraj*, the whole *swaraj*, and nothing but the *swaraj*, and he turned relentlessly against the crown. The movie to the contrary, he caused the British no end of trouble in their struggles during World War II.

BUT it should not be thought for one second that Gandhi's finally full-blown desire to detach India from the British empire gave him the slightest sympathy with other colonial peoples pursuing similar objectives. Throughout his entire life Gandhi displayed the most spectacular inability to understand or even really take in people unlike himself—a trait which V.S. Naipaul considers specifically Hindu, and I am inclined to agree. Just as Gandhi had been totally unconcerned with the situation of South Africa's blacks (he hardly noticed they were there until they rebelled), so now he was totally unconcerned with other Asians or Africans. In fact, he was adamantly *opposed* to certain Arab movements within the Ottoman empire for reasons of internal Indian politics.

At the close of World War I, the Muslims of India were deeply absorbed in what they called the "Khilafat" movement—"Khilafat" being their corruption of "Caliphate," the Caliph in question being the Ottoman Sultan. In addition to his temporal powers, the Sultan of the Ottoman empire held the spiritual position of Caliph, supreme leader of the world's Muslims and successor to the Prophet Muhammad. At the defeat of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria, Turkey), the Sultan was a prisoner in his palace in Constantinople, shorn of his religious as well as his political authority, and the Muslims of India were incensed. It so happened that the former subject peoples of the Ottoman empire, principally Arabs, were perfectly happy to be rid of this Caliph, and even the Turks were glad to be rid of him, but this made no impression at all on the Muslims of India, for whom the issue was essentially a club with which to beat the British. Until this odd historical moment, Indian Muslims had felt little real allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan either, but now that he had fallen, the British had done it! The British had taken away their Khilafat! And one of the most ardent supporters of this Indian Muslim movement was the new Hindu leader, Gandhi.

No one questions that the formative period for Gandhi as a political leader was his time in South Africa. Throughout history Indians, divided into 1,500 language and dialect groups (India today has 15 official languages), had little sense of themselves as a nation. Muslim Indians and Hindu Indians felt about as close as Christians and Moors during their 700 years of cohabitation in Spain. In addition to which, the Hindus were divided into thousands of castes and sub-castes, and there were also Parsees, Sikhs, Jains. But in South Africa officials had thrown them all in together, and in the mind of Gandhi (another one of those examples of nationalism being born in exile) grew the idea of India as a nation, and Muslim-Hindu friendship became one of the few positions on which he never really reversed himself. So Gandhi—ignoring Arabs and Turks—became an adamant supporter of the Khilafat movement out of strident Indian nationalism. He had become a national figure in India for having unified 13,000 Indians of all faiths in South Africa, and now he was determined to reach new heights by unifying hundreds of millions of Indians of all faiths in India itself. But this nationalism did not please everyone, particularly Tolstoy, who in his last years carried on a curious correspondence with the new Indian leader. For Tolstoy, Gandhi's Indian nationalism "spoils everything."

As for the "anti-colonialism" of the nationalist Indian state since independence, Indira Gandhi, India's present Prime Minister, hears an inner voice of her own, it would appear, and this inner voice told her to justify the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as produced by provocative maneuvers on the part of the U.S. and China, as well as to be the first country outside the Soviet bloc to recognize the Hanoi puppet regime in Cambodia. So everything plainly depends on who is colonizing whom, and Mrs. Gandhi's voice perhaps tells her that the subjection of Afghanistan and Cambodia to foreign rule is "defensive" colonialism. And the movie's message that Mahatma Gandhi, and by plain implication India (the country for which he plays the role of Joan of Arc), have taken a holy, unchanging stance against the colonization of nation by nation is just another of its hypocrisies. For India, when it comes to colonialism or anti-colonialism, it has been *Realpolitik* all the way.

Nonviolence: but the real center and *raison d'être* of *Gandhi* is *ahimsa*, nonviolence, which principle when incorporated into vast campaigns of noncooperation with British rule the Mahatma called by an odd name he made up himself, *satyagraha*, which means something like "truth-striving." During the

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key part of his life, Gandhi devoted a great deal of time explaining the moral and philosophical meanings of both *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. But much as the film sanitizes Gandhi to the point where one would mistake him for a Christian saint, and sanitizes India to the point where one would take it for Shangri-la, it quite sweeps away Gandhi's ethical and religious ponderings, his complexities, his qualifications, and certainly his vacillations, which simplifying process leaves us with our old European friend: pacifism. It is true that Gandhi was much impressed by the Sermon on the Mount, his favorite passage in the Bible, which he read over and over again. But for all the Sermon's inspirational value, and its service as an ideal in relations among individual human beings, no Christian state which survived has ever based its policies on the Sermon on the Mount since Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire. And no modern Western state which survives can ever base its policies on pacifism. And no Hindu state will ever base its policies on *ahimsa*. Gandhi himself—although the film dishonestly conceals this from us—many times conceded that in dire circumstances "war may have to be resorted to as a necessary evil."

It is something of an anomaly that Gandhi, held in popular myth to be a pure pacifist (a myth which governments of India have always been at great pains to sustain in the belief that it will reflect credit on India itself, and to which the present movie adheres slavishly), was until fifty not ill-disposed to war at all. As I have already noted, in three wars, no sooner had the bugles sounded than Gandhi not only gave his support, but was clamoring for arms. To form new regiments! To fight! To destroy the enemies of the empire! Regular Indian army units fought in both the Boer War and World War I, but this was not enough for Gandhi. He wanted to raise new troops, even, in the case of the Boer and Kaffir Wars, from the tiny Indian colony in South Africa. British military authorities thought it not really worth the trouble to train such a small body of Indians as soldiers, and were even resistant to training them as an auxiliary medical corps ("stretcher bearers"), but finally yielded to Gandhi's relentless importuning. As first instructed, the Indian Volunteer Corps was not supposed actually to go into combat, but Gandhi, adamant, led his Indian volunteers into the thick of battle. When the British commanding officer was mortally wounded during an engagement in the Kaffir War, Gandhi—though his corps' deputy commander—carried the officer's stretcher himself from the battlefield and for miles over the sun-baked veldt. The British empire's War Medal did not have its name for nothing, and it was generally earned.

ANYONE who wants to wade through Gandhi's endless ruminations about *himsa* and *ahimsa* (violence and nonviolence) is welcome to do so, but it is impossible for the skeptical reader to avoid the conclusion—let us say in 1920, when *swaraj* (home rule) was all the rage and Gandhi's inner voice started telling him that *ahimsa* was the thing—that this inner voice knew what it was talking about. By this I mean that, though Gandhi talked with the tongue of Hindu gods and sacred scriptures, his inner voice had a strong sense of expediency. Britain, if only comparatively speaking, was a moral nation, and nonviolent civil disobedience was plainly the best and most effective way of achieving Indian independence. Skeptics might also not be surprised to learn that as independence approached, Gandhi's inner voice began to change its tune. It has been reported that Gandhi "half-welcomed" the civil war that broke out in the last days. Even a fratricidal "bloodbath" (Gandhi's word) would be preferable to the British.

And suddenly Gandhi began endorsing violence left, right, and center. During the fearsome rioting in Calcutta he gave his approval to men "using violence in a moral cause." How could he tell them that violence was wrong, he asked, "unless I demonstrate that nonviolence is more effective?" He blessed the Nawab of Maler Kotla when he gave orders to shoot ten Muslims for every Hindu killed in his state. He sang the praises of Subhas Chandra Bose, who, sponsored by first the Nazis and then the Japanese, organized in Singapore an Indian National Army with which he hoped to conquer India with Japanese support, establishing a totalitarian dictatorship. Meanwhile, after independence in 1947, the armies of the India that Gandhi had created immediately marched into battle, incorporating the state of Hyderabad by force and making war in Kashmir on secessionist Pakistan. When Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist in January 1948 he was honored by the new state with a vast military funeral—in my view by no means inapposite.

BUT it is not widely realized (nor will this film tell you) how much violence was associated with Gandhi's so-called "nonviolent" movement from the very beginning. India's Nobel Prize-winning poet, Rabindranath Tagore, had sensed a strong current of nihilism in Gandhi almost from his first days, and as early as 1920 wrote of Gandhi's "fierce joy of annihilation," which Tagore feared would lead India into hideous orgies of devastation—which ultimately proved to be the case. Robert Payne has said that there was unquestionably an "unhealthy atmosphere" among many of Gandhi's fanatic followers, and that Gandhi's habit of going to the edge of violence and then suddenly retreating was fraught with danger. "In matters of conscience I am uncompromising," proclaimed Gandhi proudly. "Nobody can make me yield." The judgment of Tagore was categorical. Much as he might revere Gandhi as a holy man, he quite detested him as a politician and considered that his campaigns were almost always so close to violence that it was utterly disingenuous to call them nonviolent.

For every *satyagraha* true believer, moreover, sworn not to harm the adversary or even to lift a finger in his own defense, there

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were sometimes thousands of incensed freebooters and skirmishers bound by no such vow. Gandhi, to be fair, was aware of this, and nominally deplored it—but with nothing like the consistency shown in the movie. The film leads the audience to believe that Gandhi's first "fast unto death," for example, was in protest against an act of barbarous violence, the slaughter by an Indian crowd of a detachment of police constables. But in actual fact Gandhi reserved this "ultimate weapon" of his to interdict a 1931 British proposal to grant Untouchables a "separate electorate" in the Indian national legislature—in effect a kind of affirmative-action program for Untouchables. For reasons I have not been able to decrypt, Gandhi was dead set against the project, but I confess it is another scene I would like to have seen in the movie: Gandhi almost starving himself to death to block affirmative action for Untouchables.

From what I have been able to decipher, Gandhi's main preoccupation in this particular struggle was not even the British. Benefiting from the immense publicity, he wanted to induce Hindus, overnight, ecstatically, and without any of these British legalisms, to "open their hearts" to Untouchables. For a whole week Hindu India was caught up in a joyous delirium. No more would the Untouchables be scavengers and sweepers! No more would they be banned from Hindu temples! No more would they pollute at 64 feet! It lasted just a week. Then the temple doors swung shut again, and all was as before. Meanwhile, on the passionate subject of *swaraj*, Gandhi was crying, " I would not flinch from sacrificing a million lives for India's liberty!" The million Indian lives were indeed sacrificed, and in full. They fell, however, not to the bullets of British soldiers but to the knives and clubs of their fellow Indians in savage butcheries when the British finally withdrew.

ALTHOUGH the movie sneers at this reasoning as being the flimsiest of pretexts, I cannot imagine an impartial person studying the subject without concluding that concern for Indian religious minorities was one of the principal reasons Britain stayed in India as long as it did. When it finally withdrew, blood-maddened mobs surged through the streets from one end of India to the other, the majority group in each area, Hindu or Muslim, slaughtering the defenseless minority without mercy in one of the most hideous periods of carnage of modern history.

A comparison is in order. At the famous Amritsar massacre of 1919, shot in elaborate and loving detail in the present movie and treated by post-independence Indian historians as if it were Auschwitz, Ghurka troops under the command of a British officer, General Dyer, fired into an unarmed crowd of Indians defying a ban and demonstrating for Indian independence. The crowd contained women and children; 379 persons died; it was all quite horrible. Dyer was court-martialed and cashiered, but the incident lay heavily on British consciences for the next three decades, producing a severe inhibiting effect. Never again would the British empire commit another Amritsar, anywhere.

As soon as the oppressive British were gone, however, the Indians—gentle, tolerant people that they are—gave themselves over to an orgy of bloodletting. Trained troops did not pick off targets at a distance with Enfield rifles. Blood-crazed Hindus, or Muslims, ran through the streets with knives, beheading babies, stabbing women, old people. Interestingly, our movie shows none of this on camera (the oldest way of stacking the deck in Hollywood). All we see is the aged Gandhi, grieving, and of course fasting, at these terrible reports of riots. And, naturally, the film doesn't whisper a clue as to the total number of dead, which might spoil the mood somehow. The fact is that we will never know how many Indians were murdered by other Indians during the country's Independence Massacres, but almost all serious studies place the figure over a million, and some, such as Payne's sources, go to *4 million*. So, for those who like round numbers, the British killed some 400 seditious colonials at Amritsar and the name Amritsar lives in infamy, while Indians may have killed some 4 million of their own countrymen for no other reason than that they were of a different religious faith and people think their great leader would make an inspirational subject for a movie. *Ahimsa*, as can be seen, then, had an absolutely tremendous moral effect when used against Britain, but not only would it not have worked against Nazi Germany (the most obvious reproach, and of course quite true), but, the crowning irony, it had virtually no effect whatever when Gandhi tried to bring it into play against violent Indians.

Despite this at best patchy record, the film-makers have gone to great lengths to imply that this same prinicple of *ahimsa*—presented in the movie as the purest form of pacifism—is universally effective, yesterday, today, here, there, everywhere. We hear no talk from Gandhi of war sometimes being a "necessary evil," but only him announcing—and more than once—"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." In a scene very near the end of the movie, we hear Gandhi say, as if after deep reflection: "Tyrants and murderers can seem invincible at the time, but in the end they always fall. Think of it. Always." During the last scene of the movie, following the assassination, Margaret Bourke-White is keening over the death of the Great Soul with an English admiral's daughter named Madeleine Slade, in whose bowel movements Gandhi took the deepest interest (see their correspondence), and Miss Slade remarks incredulously that Gandhi felt that he had failed. They are then both incredulous for a moment, after which Miss Slade observes mournfully, "When we most needed it [presumably meaning during World War II], he offered the world a way out of madness. But the world didn't see it." Then we hear once again the assassin's shots, Gandhi's "Oh, God," and last, in case we missed them the first time, Gandhi's words (over the shimmering waters of the Ganges?): "Tyrants and murderers

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can seem invincible at the time, but in the end they always fall. Think of it. Always." This is the end of the picture.

Now, as it happens, I have been thinking about tyrants and murderers for some time. But the fact that in the end they always fall has never given me much comfort, partly because, not being a Hindu and not expecting reincarnation after reincarnation, I am simply not prepared to wait them out. It always occurs to me that, while I am waiting around for them to fall, they might do something mean to me, like fling me into a gas oven or send me off to a Gulag. Unlike a Hindu and not worshipping stasis, I am also given to wondering who is to bring these murderers and tyrants down, it being all too risky a process to wait for them and the regimes they establish simply to die of old age. The fact that a few reincarnations from now they will all have turned to dust somehow does not seem to suggest a rational strategy for dealing with the problem.

Since the movie's Madeleine Slade specifically invites us to revere the "way out of madness" that Gandhi offered the world at the time of World War II, I am under the embarrassing obligation of recording exactly what courses of action the Great Soul recommended to the various parties involved in that crisis. For Gandhi was never stinting in his advice. Indeed, the less he knew about a subject, the less he stinted.

I am aware that for many not privileged to have visited the former British Raj, the names Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Deccan are simply words. But other names, such as Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, somehow have a harder profile. The term "Jew," also, has a reasonably hard profile, and I feel all Jews sitting emotionally at the movie *Gandhi* should be apprised of the advice that the Mahatma offered their coreligionists when faced with the Nazi peril: they should commit collective suicide. If only the Jews of Germany had the good sense to offer their throats willingly to the Nazi butchers' knives and throw themselves into the sea from cliffs they would arouse world public opinion, Gandhi was convinced, and their moral triumph would be remembered for "ages to come." If they would only pray for Hitler (as their throats were cut, presumably), they would leave a "rich heritage to mankind." Although Gandhi had known Jews from his earliest days in South Africa—where his three staunchest white supporters were Jews, every one—he disapproved of how rarely they loved their enemies. And he never repented of his recommendation of collective suicide. Even after the war, when the full extent of the Holocaust was revealed, Gandhi told Louis Fischer, one of his biographers, that the Jews died anyway, didn't they? They might as well have died significantly.

Gandhi's views on the European crisis were not entirely consistent. He vigorously opposed Munich, distrusting Chamberlain. "Europe has sold her soul for the sake of a seven days' earthly existence," he declared. "The peace that Europe gained at Munich is a triumph of violence." But when the Germans moved into the Bohemian heartland, he was back to urging nonviolent resistance, exhorting the Czechs to go forth, unarmed, against the Wehrmacht, *perishing gloriously*—collective suicide again. He had Madeleine Slade draw up two letters to President Eduard Beneš of Czechoslovakia, instructing him on the proper conduct of Czechoslovak *satyagrahi* when facing the Nazis.

When Hitler attacked Poland, however, Gandhi suddenly endorsed the Polish army's military resistance, calling it "almost nonviolent." (If this sounds like double-talk, I can only urge readers to read Gandhi.) He seemed at this point to have a rather low opinion of Hitler, but when Germany's panzer divisions turned west, Allied armies collapsed under the ferocious onslaught, and British ships were streaming across the Straits of Dover from Dunkirk, he wrote furiously to the Viceroy of India: "This manslaughter must be stopped. You are losing; if you persist, it will only result in greater bloodshed. Hitler is not a bad man. . . ."

Gandhi also wrote an open letter to the British people, passionately urging them to surrender and accept whatever fate Hitler had prepared for them. "Let them take possession of your beautiful island with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds." Since none of this had the intended effect, Gandhi, the following year, addressed an open letter to the prince of darkness himself, Adolf Hitler.

THE scene must be pictured. In late December 1941, Hitler stood at the pinnacle of his might. His armies, undefeated—anywhere—ruled Europe from the English Channel to the Volga. Rommel had entered Egypt. The Japanese had reached Singapore. The U.S. Pacific Fleet lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor. At this superbly chosen moment, Mahatma Gandhi attempted to convert Adolf Hitler to the ways of nonviolence. "Dear Friend," the letter begins, and proceeds to a heartfelt appeal to the Führer to embrace all mankind "irrespective of race, color, or creed." Every admirer of the film *Gandhi* should be compelled to read this letter. Surprisingly, it is not known to have had any deep impact on Hitler. Gandhi was no doubt disappointed. He moped about, really quite depressed, but still knew he was right. When the Japanese, having cut their way through Burma, threatened India, Gandhi's strategy was to let them occupy as much of India as they liked and then to "make them feel unwanted." His way of helping his British "friends" was, at one of the worst points of the war, to launch massive civil-disobedience campaigns against them, paralyzing some of their efforts to defend India from the Japanese.

Here, then, is your leader, O followers of Gandhi: a man who thought Hitler's heart would be melted by an appeal to forget race, color, and creed, and who was sure the feelings of the Japanese would be hurt if they sensed themselves unwanted. As world-class statesmen go, it is not a very good record. Madeleine Slade was right, I suppose. The world certainly didn't

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listen to Gandhi. Nor, for that matter, has the modern government of India listened to Gandhi. Although all Indian politicians of all political parties claim to be Gandhians, India has blithely fought three wars against Pakistan, one against China, and even invaded and seized tiny, helpless Goa, and all without a whisper of a shadow of a thought of *ahimsa*. And of course India now has atomic weapons, a *satyagraha* technique if ever there was one.

I AM SURE that almost everyone who sees the movie *Gandhi* is aware that, from a religious point of view, the Mahatma was something called a "Hindu"—but I do not think one in a thousand has the dimmest notion of the fundamental beliefs of the Hindu religion. The simplest example is Gandhi's use of the word "God," which, for members of the great Western religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, all interrelated—means a personal god, a godhead. But when Gandhi said "God" in speaking English, he was merely translating from Gujarati or Hindi, and from the Hindu culture. Gandhi, in fact, simply did not believe in a personal God, and wrote in so many words, "God is not a person . . . but a force; the undefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything; a living Power that is Love. . . ." And Gandhi's very favorite definition of God, repeated many thousands of times, was, "God is Truth," which reduces God to some kind of abstract principle.

Like all Hindus, Gandhi also believed in the "Great Oneness," according to which everything is part of God, meaning not just you and me and everyone else, but every living creature, every dead creature, every plant, the pitcher of milk, the milk in the pitcher, the tumbler into which the milk is poured. . . . After all of which, he could suddenly pop up with a declaration that God is "the Maker, the Law-Giver, a jealous Lord," phrases he had probably picked up in the Bible and, with Hindu fluidity, felt he could throw in so as to embrace even more of the Great Oneness. So when Gandhi said, "I am a Hindu and a Muslim and a Christian and a Jew," it was (from a Western standpoint) Hindu double-talk. Hindu holy men, some of them reformers like Gandhi, have actually even "converted" to Islam, then Christianity, or whatever, to worship different "aspects" of the Great Oneness, before reconverting to Hinduism. Now for Christians, fastidious in matters of doctrine, a man who converts to Islam is an apostate (or vice versa), but a Hindu is a Hindu is a Hindu. The better to experience the Great Oneness, many Hindu holy men feel they should be women as well as men, and one quite famous one even claimed he could menstruate (I will spare the reader the details).

IN THIS ecumenical age, it is extremely hard to shake Westerners loose from the notion that the devout of all religions, after all, worship "the one God." But Gandhi did not worship the one God. He did not worship the God of mercy. He did not worship the God of forgiveness. And this for the simple reason that the concepts of mercy and forgiveness are absent from Hinduism. In Hinduism, men do not pray to God for forgiveness, and a man's sins are never forgiven —indeed, there is no one out there to do the forgiving. In your next life you may be born someone higher up the caste scale, but in this life there is no hope. For Gandhi, a true Hindu, did not believe in man's immortal soul. He believed with every ounce of his being in *karma*, a series, perhaps a long series, of reincarnations, and at the end, with great good fortune: *mukti*, liberation from suffering and the necessity of rebirth, nothingness. Gandhi once wrote to Tolstoy (of all people) that reincarnation explained "reasonably the many mysteries of life." So if Hindus today still treat an Untouchable as barely human, this is thought to be perfectly right and fitting because of his actions in earlier lives. As can be seen, Hinduism, by its very theology, with its sacred triad of *karma*, reincarnation, and caste (with caste an absolutely indispensable part of the system) offers the most complacent justification of inhumanity of any of the world's great religious faiths.

Gandhi, needless to say, was a Hindu reformer, one of many. Until well into his fifties, however, he accepted the caste system *in toto* as the "natural order of society," promoting control and discipline and sanctioned by his religion. Later, in bursts of zeal, he favored moderating it in a number of ways. But he stuck by the basic *varna* system (the four main caste groupings plus the Untouchables) until the end of his days, insisting that a man's position and occupation should be determined essentially by birth. Gandhi favored milder treatment of Untouchables, renaming them Harijans, "children of God," but a Harijan was still a Harijan. Perhaps because his frenzies of compassion were so extreme (no, no, *he* would clean the *Harijan*'s latrine), Hindu reverence for him as a holy man became immense, but his prescriptions were rarely followed. Industrialization and modernization have introduced new occupations and sizable social and political changes in India, but the caste system has dexterously adapted and remains largely intact today. The Sudras still labor. The sweepers still sweep. Max Weber, in his *The Religion of India*, after quoting the last line of the *Communist Manifesto*, suggests somewhat sardonically that low-caste Hindus, too, have "nothing to lose but their chains," that they, too, have "a world to win"—the only problem being that they have to die first and get born again, higher, it is to be hoped, in the immutable system of caste. Hinduism in general, wrote Weber, "is characterized by a dread of the magical evil of innovation." Its very essence is to guarantee stasis.

In addition to its literally thousands of castes and sub-castes, Hinduism has countless sects, with discordant rites and beliefs. It has no clear ecclesiastical organization and no universal body of doctrine. What I have described above is your standard, no-frills Hindu, of which in many ways Gandhi was an excellent example. With the reader's permission I will skip over the

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Upanishads, Vedanta, Yoga, the Puranas, Tantra, Bhakti, the *Bhagavad-Gita* (which contains theistic elements), Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and the terrible Kali or Durga, to concentrate on those central beliefs that most motivated Gandhi's behavior as a public figure.

IT SHOULD be plain by now that there is much in the Hindu culture that is distasteful to the Western mind, and consequently is largely unknown in the West—not because Hindus do not go on and on about these subjects, but because a Western squeamishness usually prevents these preoccupations from reaching print (not to mention film). When Gandhi attended his first Indian National Congress he was most distressed at seeing the Hindus—not laborers but high-caste Hindus, civic leaders—defecating all over the place, as if to pay attention to where the feces fell was somehow unclean. (For, as V.S. Naipaul puts it, in a twisted Hindu way it is *unclean to clean*. It is unclean even to notice. "It was the business of the sweepers to remove excrement, and until the sweepers came, people were content to live in the midst of their own excrement.") Gandhi exhorted Indians endlessly on the subject, saying that sanitation was the first need of India, but he retained an obvious obsession with excreta, gleefully designing latrines and latrine drills for all hands at the ashram, and, all in all, what with giving and taking enemas, and his public bowel movements, and his deep concern with everyone else's bowel movements (much correspondence), and endless dietary experiments *as a function* of bowel movements, he devoted a rather large share of his life to the matter. Despite his constant campaigning for sanitation, it is hard to believe that Gandhi was not permanently marked by what Arthur Koestler terms the Hindu "morbid infatuation with filth," and what V.S. Naipaul goes as far as to call the Indian "deification of filth." (Decades later, Krishna Menon, a Gandhian and one-time Indian Defense Minister, was still fortifying his sanctity by drinking a daily glass of urine.)

But even more important, because it is dealt with in the movie directly—if of course dishonestly—is Gandhi's parallel obsession with *brahmacharya,* or sexual chastity. There is a scene late in the film in which Margaret Bourke-White (again!) asks Gandhi's wife if he has ever broken his vow of chastity, taken, at that time, about forty years before. Gandhi's wife, by now a sweet old lady, answers wistfully, with a pathetic little note of hope, "Not yet." What lies behind this adorable scene is the following: Gandhi held as one of his most profound beliefs (a fundamental doctrine of Hindu medicine) that a man, as a matter of the utmost importance, must conserve his *bindu,* or seminal fluid. Koestler (in *The Lotus and the Robot*) gives a succinct account of this belief, widespread among orthodox Hindus: "A man's vital energy is concentrated in his seminal fluid, and this is stored in a cavity in the skull. It is the most precious substance in the body . . . an elixir of life both in the physical and mystical sense, distilled from the blood. . . . A large store of *bindu* of pure quality guarantees health, longevity, and supernatural powers. . . . Conversely, every loss of it is a physical and spiritual impoverishment." Gandhi himself said in so many words, "A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly, while in the chaste man secretions [semen] are sublimated into a vital force pervading his whole being." And again, still Gandhi: "Ability to retain and assimilate the vital liquid is a matter of long training. When properly conserved it is transmuted into matchless energy and strength." Most male Hindus go ahead and have sexual relations anyway, of course, but the belief in the value of *bindu* leaves the whole culture in what many observers have called a permanent state of "semen anxiety." When Gandhi once had a nocturnal emission he almost had a nervous breakdown.

Gandhi was a truly fanatical opponent of sex for pleasure, and worked it out carefully that a married couple should be allowed to have sex three or four times *in a lifetime,* merely to have children, and favored embodying this restriction in the law of the land. The sexual-gratification wing of the present-day feminist movement would find little to attract them in Gandhi's doctrine, since in all his seventy-nine years it never crossed his mind once that there could be anything enjoyable in sex for women, and he was constantly enjoining Indian women to deny themselves to men, to refuse to let their husbands "abuse" them. Gandhi had been married at thirteen, and when he took his vow of chastity, after twenty-four years of sexual activity, he ordered his two oldest sons, both young men, to be totally chaste as well.

BUT Gandhi's monstrous behavior to his own family is notorious. He denied his sons education—to which he was bitterly hostile. His wife remained illiterate. Once when she was very sick, hemorrhaging badly, and seemed to be dying, he wrote to her from jail icily: "My struggle is not merely political. It is religious and therefore quite pure. It does not matter much whether one dies in it or lives. I hope and expect that you will also think likewise and not be unhappy." To die, that is. On another occasion he wrote, speaking about her: "I simply cannot bear to look at Ba's face. The expression is often like that on the face of a meek cow and gives one the feeling, as a cow occasionally does, that in her own dumb manner she is saying something. I see, too, that there is selfishness in this suffering of hers. . . ." And in the end he let her die, as I have said, rather than allow British doctors to give her a shot of penicillin (while his inner voice told him that it would be all right for him to take quinine). He disowned his oldest son, Harilal, for wishing to marry. He banished his second son for giving his struggling older brother a small sum of money. Harilal grew quite wild with rage against his father, attacked him in print, converted to Islam, took to women, drink, and died an alcoholic in 1948. The Mahatma attacked him right back in his pious way, proclaiming modestly in an open letter in

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Young India, "Men may be good, not necessarily their children."

IF THE reader thinks I have delivered unduly harsh judgments on India and Hindu civilization, I can refer him to *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*, two quite brilliant books on India by V.S. Naipaul, a Hindu, and a Brahmin, born in Trinidad. In the second, the more discursive, Naipaul writes that India "has little to offer the world except its Gandhian concept of holy poverty and the recurring crooked comedy of its holy men, and . . . is now dependent in every practical way on other, imperfectly understood civilizations."

Hinduism, Naipaul writes, "has given men no idea of a contract with other men, no idea of the state. It has enslaved one quarter of the population [the Untouchables] and always has left the whole fragmented and vulnerable. Its philosophy of withdrawal has diminished men intellectually and not equipped them to respond to challenge; it has stifled growth. So that again and again in India history has repeated itself: vulnerability, defeat, withdrawal." Indians, Naipaul says, have no historical notion of the past. "Through centuries of conquest the civilization declined into an apparatus for survival, turning away from the mind . . . and creativity . . . stripping itself down, like all decaying civilizations, to its magical practices and imprisoning social forms." He adds later, "No government can survive on Gandhian fantasy; and the spirituality, the solace of a conquered people, which Gandhi turned into a form of national assertion, has soured more obviously into the nihilism that it always was." Naipaul condemns India again and again for its "intellectual parasitism," its "intellectual vacuum," its "emptiness," the "blankness of its decayed civilization." "Indian poverty is more dehumanizing than any machine; and, more than in any machine civilization, men in India are units, locked up in the straitest obedence by their idea of their *dharma*. . . . The blight of caste is not only untouchability and the consequent deification in India of filth; the blight, in an India that tries to grow, is also the overall obedience it imposes, . . . the diminishing of adventurousness, the pushing away from men of individuality and the possibility of excellence."

Although Naipaul blames Gandhi as well as India itself for the country's failure to develop an "ideology" adequate for the modern world, he grants him one or two magnificent moments—always, it should be noted, when responding to "other civilizations." For Gandhi, Naipaul remarks pointedly, had matured in alien societies: Britain and South Africa. With age, back in India, he seemed from his autobiography to be headed for "lunacy," says Naipaul, and was only rescued by external events, his reactions to which were determined in part by *"his experience of the democratic ways of South Africa"* [my emphasis]. For it is one of the enduring ironies of Gandhi's story that it was in South Africa—*South Africa*—a country in which he became far more deeply involved than he had been in Britain, that Gandhi caught a warped glimmer of that strange institution of which he would never have seen even a reflection within Hindu society: democracy.

ANOTHER of Gandhi's most powerful obsessions (to which the movie alludes in such a syrupy and misleading manner that it would be quite impossible for the audience to understand it) was his visceral hatred of the modern, industrial world. He even said, more than once, that he actually wouldn't mind if the British remained in India, to police it, conduct foreign policy, and such trivia, if it would only take away its factories and railways. And Gandhi hated, not just factories and railways, but also the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, the airplane. He happened to be in England when Louis Blériot, the great French aviation pioneer, first flew the English Channel—an event which at the time stirred as much excitement as Lindbergh's later flight across the Atlantic—and Gandhi was in a positive fury that giant crowds were acclaiming such an insignificant event. He used the telegraph extensively himself, of course, and later would broadcast daily over All-India Radio during his highly publicized fasts, but consistency was never Gandhi's strong suit.

Gandhi's view of the good society, about which he wrote *ad nauseam*, was an Arcadian vision set far in India's past. It was the pristine Indian village, where, with all diabolical machinery and technology abolished—and with them all unhappiness—contented villagers would hand-spin their own yarn, hand-weave their own cloth, serenely follow their bullocks in the fields, tranquilly prodding them in the anus in the time-hallowed Hindu way. This was why Gandhi taught himself to spin, and why all the devout Gandhians, like monkeys, spun also. This was Gandhi's program. Since he said it several thousand times, we have no choice but to believe that he sincerely desired the destruction of modern technology and industry and the return of India to the way of life of an idyllic (and quite likely nonexistent) past. And yet this same Mahatma Gandhi hand-picked as the first Prime Minister of an independent India Pandit Nehru, who was committed to a policy of industrialization and for whom the last word in the politico-economic organization of the state was (and remained) Beatrice Webb.

WHAT are we to make of this Gandhi? We are dealing with two strangenesses here, Indians and Gandhi himself. The plain fact is that both Indian leaders and the Indian people ignored Gandhi's precepts almost as thoroughly as did Hitler. They ignored him on sexual abstinence. They ignored his modifications of the caste system. They ignored him on the evils of modern industry, the radio, the telephone. They ignored him on education. They ignored his appeals for national union, the former British Raj splitting into a Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu India. No one sought a return to the Arcadian Indian village of antiquity. They ignored him, above all,

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on *ahimsa*, nonviolence. There was always a small number of exalted *satyagrahi* who, martyrs, would march into the constables' truncheons, but one of the things that alarmed the British—as Tagore indicated—was the explosions of violence that accompanied all this alleged nonviolence. Naipaul writes that with independence India discovered again that it was "cruel and horribly violent." Jaya Prakash Narayan, the late opposition leader, once admitted, "We often behave like animals. . . . We are more likely than not to become aggressive, wild, violent. We kill and burn and loot. . . ."

Why, then, did the Hindu masses so honor this Mahatma, almost all of whose most cherished beliefs they so pointedly ignored, even during his lifetime? For Hindus, the question is not really so puzzling. Gandhi, for them, after all, was a Mahatma, a holy man. He was a symbol of sanctity, not a guide to conduct. Hinduism has a long history of holy men who, traditionally, do not offer themselves up to the public as models of general behavior but withdraw from the world, often into an ashram, to pursue their sanctity in private, a practice which all Hindus honor, if few emulate. The true oddity is that Gandhi, this holy man, having drawn from British sources his notions of nationalism and democracy, also absorbed from the British his model of virtue in public life. He was a historical original, a Hindu holy man that a British model of public service and dazzling advances in mass communications thrust out into the world, to become a great moral leader and the "father of his country."

SOME Indians feel that after the early 1930's, Gandhi, although by now world-famous, was in fact in sharp decline. Did he at least "get the British out of India"? Some say no. India, in the last days of the British Raj, was already largely governed by Indians (a fact one would never suspect from this movie), and it is a common view that without this irrational, wildly erratic holy man the transition to full independence might have gone both more smoothly and more swiftly. There is much evidence that in his last years Gandhi was in a kind of spiritual retreat and, with all his endless praying and fasting, was no longer pursuing (the very words seem strange in a Hindu context) "the public good." What he was pursuing, in a strict reversion to Hindu tradition, was his personal holiness. In earlier days he had scoffed at the title accorded him, Mahatma (literally "great soul"). But toward the end, during the hideous paroxysms that accompanied independence, with some of the most unspeakable massacres taking place in Calcutta, he declared, "And if . . . the whole of Calcutta swims in blood, it will not dismay me. For it will be a willing offering of innocent blood." And in his last days, after there had already been one attempt on his life, he was heard to say, "*I am a true Mahatma.*"

We can only wonder, furthermore, at a public figure who lectures half his life about the necessity of abolishing modern industry and returning India to its ancient primitiveness, and then picks a Fabian socialist, already drawing up Five-Year Plans, as the country's first Prime Minister. Audacious as it may seem to contest the views of such heavy thinkers as Margaret Bourke-White, Ralph Nader, and J.K. Galbraith (who found the film's Gandhi "true to the original" and endorsed the movie wholeheartedly), we have a right to reservations about such a figure as a public man.

I should not be surprised if Gandhi's greatest real humanitarian achievement was an improvement in the treatment of Untouchables—an area where his efforts were not only assiduous, but actually bore fruit. In this, of course, he ranks well behind the British, who abolished *suttee*—over ferocious Hindu opposition—in 1829. The ritual immolation by fire of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, *suttee* had the full sanction of the Hindu religion, although it might perhaps be wrong to overrate its importance. Scholars remind us that it was never universal, only "usual." And there was, after all, a rather extensive range of choice. In southern India the widow was flung into her husband's fire-pit. In the valley of the Ganges she was placed on the pyre when it was already aflame. In western India, she supported the head of the corpse with her right hand, while, torch in her left, she was allowed the honor of setting the whole thing on fire herself. In the north, where perhaps women were more impious, the widow's body was constrained on the burning pyre by long poles pressed down by her relatives, just in case, screaming in terror and choking and burning to death, she might forget her *dharma*. So, yes, ladies, members of the National Council of Churches, believers in the one God, mourners for that holy India before it was despoiled by those brutish British, remember *suttee*, that interesting, exotic practice in which Hindus, over the centuries, burned to death countless millions of helpless women in a spirit of pious devotion, crying for all I know, *Hai Rama! Hai Rama!*

I WOULD like to conclude with some observations on two Englishmen, Madeleine Slade, the daughter of a British admiral, and Sir Richard Attenborough, the producer, director, and spiritual godfather of the film, *Gandhi*. Miss Slade was a jewel in Gandhi's crown—a member of the British ruling class, as she was, turned fervent disciple of this Indian Mahatma. She is played in the film by Geraldine James with nobility, dignity, and a beatific manner quite up to the level of Candice Bergen, and perhaps even the Virgin Mary. I learn from Ved Mehta's *Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles*, however, that Miss Slade had another master before Gandhi. In about 1917, when she was fifteen, she made contact with the spirit of Beethoven by listening to his sonatas on a player piano. "I threw myself down on my knees in the seclusion of my room," she wrote in her autobiography, "and prayed, *really* prayed to God for the first time in my life: 'Why have I been born over a century too late? Why hast Thou given me realization of him

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and yet put all these years in between?' "

After World War I, still seeking how best to serve Beethoven, Miss Slade felt an "infinite longing" when she visited his birthplace and grave, and, finally, at the age of thirty-two, caught up with Romain Rolland, who had partly based his renowned *Jean Christophe* on the composer. But Rolland had written a new book now, about a man called Gandhi, "another Christ," and before long Miss Slade was quite literally falling on her knees before the Mahatma in India, "conscious of nothing but a sense of light." Although one would never guess this from the film, she soon (to quote Mehta's impression) began "to get on Gandhi's nerves," and he took every pretext to keep her away from him, in other ashrams, and working in schools and villages in other parts of India. She complained to Gandhi in letters about discrimination against her by orthodox Hindus, who expected her to live in rags and vile quarters during menstruation, considering her unclean and virtually untouchable. Gandhi wrote back, agreeing that women should not be treated like that, but adding that she should accept it all with grace and cheerfulness, "without thinking that the orthodox party is in any way unreasonable." (This is as good an example as any of Gandhi's coherence, even in his prime. Women should not be treated like that, but the people who treated them that way were in no way unreasonable.)

Some years after Gandhi's death, Miss Slade rediscovered Beethoven, becoming conscious again "of the realization of my true self. For a while I remained lost in the world of the spirit. . . ." She soon returned to Europe and serving Beethoven, her "true calling." When Mehta finally found her in Vienna, she told him, "Please don't ask me any more about Bapu [Gandhi]. I now belong to van Beethoven. In matters of the spirit, there is always a call." A polite description of Madeleine Slade is that she was an extreme eccentric. In the vernacular, she was slightly cracked.

Sir Richard Attenborough, however, isn't cracked at all. The only puzzle is how he suddenly got to be a pacifist, a fact which his press releases now proclaim to the world. Attenborough trained as a pilot in the RAF in World War II, and was released briefly to the cinema, where he had already begun his career in Noël Coward's superpatriotic *In Which We Serve*. He then returned to active service, flying combat missions with the RAF. Richard Attenborough, in short—when Gandhi was pleading with the British to surrender to the Nazis, assuring them that "Hitler is not a bad man"—was fighting for his country. The Viceroy of India warned Gandhi grimly that "We are engaged in a struggle," and Attenborough played his part in that great struggle, and proudly, too, as far as I can tell. To my knowledge he has never had a *crise de conscience* on the matter, or announced that he was carried away by the war fever and that Britain really should have capitulated to the Nazis—which Gandhi would have had it do.

ALTHOUGH the present film is handsomely done in its way, no one has ever accused Attenborough of being excessively endowed with either acting or directing talent. In the 50's he was a popular young British entertainer, but his most singular gift appeared to be his entrepreneurial talent as a businessman, using his movie fees to launch successful London restaurants (at one time four), and other business ventures. At the present moment he is Chairman of the Board of Capital Radio (Britain's most successful commercial station), Goldcrest Films, the British Film Institute, and Deputy Chairman of the BBC's new Channel 4 television network. Like most members of the *nouveaux riches* on the rise, he has also reached out for symbols of respectability and public service, and has assembled quite a collection. He is a Trustee of the Tate Gallery, Pro-Chancellor of Sussex University, President of Britain's Muscular Dystrophy Group, Chairman of the Actors' Charitable Trust and, of course, Chairman of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. There may be even more, but this is a fair sampling. In 1976, quite fittingly, he was knighted, by a Labor government, but his friends say he still insists on being called "Dickie."

It is quite general today for members of the professional classes, even when not artistic types, to despise commerce and feel that the state, the economy, and almost everything else would be better and more idealistically run by themselves rather than these loutish businessmen. Sir Dickie, however, being a highly successful businessman himself, would hardly entertain such an antipathy. But as he scrambled his way to the heights perhaps he found himself among high-minded idealists, utopians, equalitarians, and lovers of the oppressed. Now there are those who think Sir Dickie converted to pacifism when Indira Gandhi handed him a check for several million dollars. But I do not believe this. I think Sir Dickie converted to pacifism out of idealism.

HIS pacifism, I confess, has been more than usually muddled. In 1968, after twenty-six years in the profession, he made his directorial debut with *Oh! What a Lovely War*, with its superb parody of Britain's jingoistic music-hall songs of the "Great War," World War I. Since I had the good fortune to see Joan Littlewood's original London stage production, which gave the work its entire style, I cannot think that Sir Dickie's contribution was unduly large. Like most commercially successful parodies—from Sandy Wilson's *The Boy Friend* to Broadway's *Superman, Dracula,* and *The Crucifier of Blood*—*Oh! What a Lovely War* depended on the audience's (if not Miss Littlewood's) retaining a substantial affection for the subject being parodied: in this case, a swaggering hyper-patriotism, which recalled days when the empire was great. In any event, since Miss Littlewood identified herself as a Communist and since Communists, as far as I know, are never pacifists, Sir Dickie's case for the production's "pacifism" seems stymied from the other angle as well.

Sir Dickie's next blow for paci-

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fism was *Young Winston* (1973), which, the new publicity manual says, "explored how Churchill's childhood traumas and lack of parental affection became the spurs which goaded him to . . . a position of great power." One would think that a man who once flew combat missions under the orders of the great war leader—and who seemingly wanted his country to win—would thank God for childhood traumas and lack of parental affection if such were needed to provide a Churchill in the hour of peril. But on pressed Sir Dickie, in the year of his knighthood, with *A Bridge Too Far*, the story of the futile World War II assault on Arnhem, described by Sir Dickie—now, at least—as "a further plea for pacifism."

But does Sir Richard Attenborough seriously think that, rather than go through what we did at Arnhem, we should have given in, let the Nazis be, and even—true pacifists—let them occupy Britain, Canada, the United States, contenting ourselves only with "making them feel unwanted"? At the level of idiocy to which discussions of war and peace have sunk in the West, every harebrained idealist who discovers that war is not a day at the beach seems to think he has found an irresistible argument for pacifism. Is Pearl Harbor an argument for pacifism? Bataan? Dunkirk? Dieppe? The Ardennes? Roland fell at Roncesvalles. Is the *Song of Roland* a pacifist epic? If so, why did William the Conqueror have it chanted to his men as they marched into battle at Hastings? Men prove their valor in defeat as well as in victory. Even Sergeant-Major Gandhi knew that. Up in the moral never-never land which Sir Dickie now inhabits, perhaps they think the Alamo led to a great wave of pacifism in Texas.

In a feat of sheer imbecility, Attenborough has dedicated *Gandhi* to Lord Mountbatten, who commanded the Southeast Asian Theater during World War II. Mountbatten, you might object, was hardly a pacifist—but then again he was murdered by Irish terrorists, which proves how frightful all that sort of thing is, Sir Dickie says, and how we must end it all by imitating Gandhi. Not the Gandhi who called for seas of innocent blood, you understand, but the movie-Gandhi, the nice one.

THE historical Gandhi's favorite mantra, strange to tell, was *Do or Die* (he called it literally that, a "mantra"). I think Sir Dickie should reflect on this, because it means, *dixit* Gandhi, that a man must be prepared to die for what he believes in, for, *himsa* or *ahimsa*, death is always there, and in an ultimate test men who are not prepared to face it lose. Gandhi was erratic, irrational, tyrannical, obstinate. He sometimes verged on lunacy. He believed in a religion whose ideas I find somewhat repugnant. He worshipped cows. But I still say this: he was brave. He feared no one.

On a lower level of being, I have consequently given some thought to the proper mantra for spectators of the movie *Gandhi*. After much reflection, in homage to Ralph Nader, I have decided on *Caveat Emptor*, "buyer beware." Repeated many thousand times in a seat in the cinema it might with luck lead to *Om*, the Hindu dream of nothingness, the Ultimate Void.

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Bearing False Witness

THE LONGEST WAR: ISRAEL IN LEBANON. By JACOBO TIMERMAN. *Knopf. 167 pp. $11.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH R. WISSE

The Longest War is Jacobo Timerman's response, in the form of a journal, to the Israeli incursion into Lebanon between June and August of 1982. A highly impressionistic document, Timerman's journal, which loosely follows the chronology of the war, includes some account of his own activities during the summer, sporadic quotations from Israel's English-language press, selective anecdotes and references to events in the country, all held together by a series of attacks on the current government of Israel that mount in intensity as the book proceeds.

Timerman is, of course, the former editor and publisher of the liberal Argentinian newspaper, *La Opinión*, who became the focus of international attention when he was arrested by the Argentine military authorities in the spring of 1977. Thirty months later, following his release, expulsion from the country, and passage to Israel, he became a symbol of resistance to right-wing dictatorship. Timerman's account of his incarceration, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, most of which originally appeared in the *New Yorker*, gave a chilling description of his captivity. To Americans for whom Argentina meant arbitrary rule through fear, the suppression of civil liberties, and mass arrests and disappearances, Timerman's account was confirmation of their worst imaginings.

The artful selectivity of Timerman's reportage in that earlier book did, it is true, raise serious questions. Some who had followed Timerman's case in Argentina asked why, in his book, he made no mention of his business partnership with the notorious investment banker David Graiver, which was the ostensible reason for his arrest. Troubling too was Timerman's use of anti-Semitism as the organizing principle of his story. Somehow, after a lifetime of engaged and canny journalism which had made him one of the most powerful and renowned newspapermen in Argentina, Timerman was now presenting himself first and foremost as a persecuted Jew (one gullible reviewer even called his book "a Zionist classic"). Particularly nettling in this regard was the way in which, through the literary technique of cross-cutting, Timerman deliberately collapsed any distinctions between Argentina and Hitler's Germany, suggesting without substantiation that Argentina's Jews faced not just anti-Semitism but a threat of genocide.

The same selectivity is at work in the present book as well, but it is turned now on Israel. Timerman contends that Israel deliberately exaggerated the danger that the PLO posed in Lebanon in order to justify its otherwise unprovoked war. According to this analysis, the PLO had been on the verge of recognizing Israel last summer—and in any case the organization was no threat, being just a poorly equipped faction of stragglers that was exploited by the Russians, betrayed by Western Europeans and "all those who approached it," and misled by the academics of Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia into believing the myth of its own "*machismo*." Timerman is impatient with the PLO, but only for its stupidity.

Israel, on the other hand, he finds guilty of crimes so great as to have destroyed the moral integrity of the Jewish people, whom it has turned into "efficient criminals." Since, according to Timerman, Israelis do not fear for their security —they know they are unbeatable in the Middle East—the attack upon the PLO and the innocent civilians of Lebanon can only be attributed to the Napoleonic ambition of General Ariel Sharon and the messianic geopolitics of Menachem Begin. These two men are the heads of an anti-democratic, incipiently totalitarian government which Timerman repeatedly compares with the "fascist" government of Argentina. He charges Israel with having visited wanton destruction upon Lebanon in a military adventure that has only succeeded in spreading a reign of terror. Far from being encircled by enemies, Israel is itself now encircling and colonizing its neighbors—as (in another of the book's recurrent analogies) the whites have done in South Africa.

Timerman has an alternative to Israeli expansionism, namely, the establishment of a Palestinian state. This would be not only a boon to Israelis but a necessary corrective; the existence of two complementary democracies would restore to Israel the democratic spirit it has forfeited by its recent actions. But in the meantime, what he recommends to Israelis who, like him, are conscience-stricken, is civil disobedience. He advises his own son to defy "the extremists who now control the Israeli army" by refusing to obey military orders. As for other action that might be taken, in the last pages of the book Timerman appeals to the Jews of the Diaspora: it is, he writes, up to them to act as judge and jury of Israel's criminal behavior:

> Only the world's Jewish people, I believe, can now do something for us. The Diaspora Jews who have maintained the values of our moral and cultural traditions —those values now trampled on here by intolerance and Israeli nationalism—should establish a Jewish tribunal to pass judgment on Begin, Sharon, Eitan, and the entire general staff of the Israeli armed forces.

THE publishers describe this book as a *cri de coeur*, but *cri de guerre* would be more accurate. Under a mask of moral concern, Timerman has unleased an assault against his political opponents that compensates in rhetorical violence for

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what it lacks in evidence or analysis. Without ever identifying his own political point of view, Timerman speaks as if he were the sole proprietor of Jewish moral and cultural values, and as if the objects of his attack had no claim to those values, let alone to political legitimacy.

Even within the jungle of Israeli politics, where moralizing attacks on one's opponents have become distressingly more frequent, Timerman's aggression is in a class by itself. First there is his disregard for the facts, noted by even some friendly reviewers of the book. Conor Cruise O'Brien, who admires *The Longest War* as literature (presumably a species of fiction), points out nevertheless that Israel's grounds for intervention in Lebanon were not frivolous, and that contrary to Timerman's claim, the eviction of the PLO from Lebanon has created a new opportunity in the region. On the basis of his own first-hand observation of the war and that of all other foreign correspondents with whom he compared notes, O'Brien refutes in particular Timerman's view of the victimized Lebanese. Far from resenting their Israeli occupiers, as Timerman would have it, most Lebanese welcomed the Israelis as their liberators from the PLO, and "everybody was glad the Israelis had gotten rid of them."

The Jerusalem *Post*, Timerman's chief source of information during the war (since he knows no Hebrew), and a paper highly critical of Begin and Sharon, published its own review of his book under the heading, "A Few Little Lies." The reviewer calls Timerman a *shvitzer* (empty boaster) who is "simply out to capitalize on his new Israeli identity." Perhaps the most damaging criticism has come from the mother of an Israeli major who was killed at Beaufort Castle. Timerman dedicates his book to this fallen soldier with characteristic insensitivity to fact:

> I know that he was a pacifist.
>
> I know that he could not live and die for his own ideas because he had to kill and die for the obsessions of inept rulers and vain military men who are running a nation created by moralists and dreamers.

Major Harnik's mother protested to the newspapers over this act of false appropriation; she was especially indignant at the allegation that her son was a pacifist, which she called absurd.

But these and similar challenges to Timerman's credibility should not faze him in the least; he answers to a higher vision. Here is how he summarizes the historical significance of the events of the past summer:

> For the first time Israel had attacked a neighboring country without being attacked; for the first time it had mounted a screen of provocation to justify a war. For the first time Israel brought destruction to entire cities: Tyre, Sidon, Damur, Beirut. For the first time miliary spokesmen had

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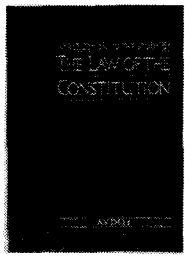

Introduction to the Study of The Law of the Constitution

By A. V. Dicey

Forward by Roger E. Michener

Dicey's classic study of the British Constitution and the rule of law was first published in 1885. In subsequent editions he tried to take account of intervening constitutional developments. The last edition Dicey himself prepared was the eighth, which appeared in 1915. This Liberty*Classics* volume presents that edition rather than later posthumous editions in which Dicey's own work was further updated by an editor. While Dicey's discussion of British law is of interest in its own right, his discussion of the concept of the rule of law will be of at least equal interest to contemporary readers. Hardcover $15.00, Softcover $7.00.

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lied. For the first time the Israeli press joined them in the successful mission of lying to the public. For the first time officers and men did not know the objective or the goals of the campaign. For the first time the actual damage inflicted on the invading country was hidden along with the number of deaths. For the first time reservists on leave from the front demonstrated on the streets of Jerusalem because they consider themselves betrayed. For the first time jokes circulate openly.

One could say that anyone capable of writing this last sentence in a country with humor collections going back to the War of Independence is himself a joke who circulates openly. The single circumstance that might explain this paragraph is that "for the first time" Timerman was in Israel during a war. For the rest, he turns unsubstantiated charges into statements of fact, and so smears the historical record that even the *genuine* firsts and flaws of this war become obscured.

Indeed, most of Timerman's assertions about this war could be made as readily about previous wars, and are as readily refuted. Thus this was not, in fact, the first time Israel had "attacked a neighboring country without being attacked." If to attack means to strike first, then Israel had already satisfied Timerman's criterion of sin in 1956. And, on the other side, if by "being attacked" we mean border incursions and a palpable threat to security, then the PLO ministate across the border in a dismembered Lebanon constituted no less genuine a threat to Israeli citizens than any the country faced since its birth.

Similarly with a "screen of provocation." The presence along Israel's borders of states that refuse to recognize its right to exist, and of armed forces dedicated by word and deed to its destruction, may be considered either a provocation or a "screen of provocation," depending on the degree to which the actual security of the state and its citizens is being endangered. Insofar as this is a matter also of political judgment (some left-wing critics have argued that even the Six-Day War was "provoked" by Israel, since the Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran would have had to be tested before it could be made an excuse for a first strike!), Israeli voters are free to speak their minds on the matter. Those who approved the action in Lebanon—the vast majority—may well have remembered that the Yom Kippur War of 1973 was indeed "the first time" that hundreds of Israelis had been killed because of military unpreparedness and a false sense of security.

"For the first time Israel brought destruction to entire cities." Most of Tyre, Sidon, and Damur were destroyed long before Israel entered them, during the decade-long Lebanese internal war sparked by the presence of the PLO; honest reporters noticed how *little* further damage was done by the Israeli army. In West Beirut, Israeli forces tried to pinpoint areas in which the PLO had concentrated its men and equipment. Contrarily, if accountability for innocent suffering is to be the measure of war, then the leveling of Kuneitra in 1973 must be thrown into the balance, too, whether or not Timerman happened to find his moment of anguish in its crumbling walls. In the skills of bearing false witness, Timerman would have much to teach both Israel's military spokesmen and its press reporters, who as it happens were commended by the International Press Council for their dedication to truthfulness.

Some reviewers have likened Timerman's authoritarian personality and dangerous egotism to that of his nemesis, Ariel Sharon. But on the political spectrum Timerman is more readily comparable with the Jewish Defense League's Rabbi Meir Kahane, who shares his contempt for Israeli democracy and is equally certain that he alone knows what the country needs. Although the most recent public-opinion polls show that Timerman's political position—support for a Palestinian state on the former West Bank of Jordan—is held by all of 2.2 percent of the population, he goes on speaking anyway in the name of "we Israelis," and, like Kahane, advocating civil disobedience to promote his convictions.

According to Timerman, the recent action in Lebanon has transformed the moral history not only of the modern state of Israel but of the Jewish people "at least of the last two thousand years," who "for the first time" bear the collective guilt of damage inflicted on others. The incursion is not, for him, a point on a political continuum but an act of original sin that has soiled the once unspotted virtue of the nation. His "explanation" for this sudden, transforming development is, naturally, General Sharon, who "keep[s] the Israeli citizen in fear; he has accomplished it. He needs our fear; he has it. Even in our country, they [*sic*] make the Jews live in fear."

In the light of such sentiments it is small wonder that among those Israelis most deeply humiliated by Timerman are many Labor intellectuals and sympathizers of the Peace Now movement, who know that the majority of Israeli voters are hardly held in thrall by fear of Ariel Sharon but are, rather, attracted by a different political option from the one represented by Peace Now. Among the few advantages currently enjoyed by Labor is an image of political temperance and responsibility; if Timerman comes to be perceived as an authentic voice of the liberal Left, which he is not, that advantage will be seriously weakened.

Then, too, many Israelis are not likely to take kindly to the idea that readers of the *New Yorker*, where this diatribe first appeared, should be invited to sit in moral judgment upon them, and on their "collective guilt." As for the soldiers who have recently had to haul out the Jewish settlers of Yamit in order to make peace with Egypt, they may have a nicer appreciation than Timerman's of the consequences of an ideology of civil disobedience in a country where more than one faction is convinced of the absolute justice of its cause.

Reading Timerman I was reminded of another passionate denunciation of Israel, this one written by a Russian émigré, Ephraim Sevela, after having spent five years in the country (to Timerman's three). The terms of Sevela's indictment in *Farewell, Israel* differ

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markedly from Timerman's in *The Longest War,* but the two share a withering disdain for the moral fiber of the state, and also a certitude that it is doomed. One knows that Israeli democracy is much stronger than these two men claim if it has been able to weather such consequences of the Law of Return as they.

The Carter Presidency

KEEPING FAITH. By JIMMY CARTER. *Bantam. 622 pp. $22.50.*
CRISIS. By HAMILTON JORDAN. *Putnam. 431 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL LEDEEN

RARELY has a President passed so quickly and so thoroughly from public memory as has Jimmy Carter; his memoirs, *Keeping Faith,* are unlikely to change the situation. The picture of the President that emerges from this overwritten yet revealing volume is one of a small man, burdened by feelings of guilt about America and its role in the world, obsessed by detail yet totally lacking in an overall view of the country, let alone of the larger world.

Carter's view of us was for all practical purposes the view of the Left, couched in religious terms. In his Inaugural Address he wanted to cite a verse from Chronicles: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." At the time, the sins Carter had in mind were those he believed had been carried out by Henry Kissinger, the CIA, and the Watergate crowd:

> Instead of promoting freedom and democratic principles, our government seemed to believe that in any struggle with evil, we could not compete effectively unless we played by the same rules or lack of rules as the evildoers. I was deeply troubled by the lies our people had been told; our exclusion from the shaping of American political and military policy in Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile, and other countries; and other embarrassing activities of our government, such as the CIA's role in plotting murder and other crimes.

Later, he would alter his vision somewhat, and expand the crisis of the American spirit to a "malaise" affecting the populace as a whole.

Carter's view, shared by most of the major figures in his administration (with the exceptions of Zbigniew Brzezinski and James Schlesinger, who were also the only ones who gave the President good advice on Iran), was that the United States had to be restored to moral purity. Accordingly, he authorized a series of actions that led to a great purge

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of the CIA, restrained the ability of this country to help friends throughout the world, systematically rejected proposals for a serious increase in our military power, and turned the other cheek to the Russians when they sent Cuban troops into Africa. It was not until the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 that Carter suddenly revised his view of the Russians, and started to take limited counteraction.

Given the "moral" vision at the heart of Carter's politics, one might have expected to hear a good deal about all this. But there is hardly a word here of the Horn of Africa, of Cuban troops, of the "purification" and "modernization" of the CIA, of international terrorism, of the fall of Somoza and the installation of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, or of the factors that drove Carter at the last to reestablish a military-aid program to the beleaguered government of El Salvador. Instead we are treated to what used to be called "chronicles" rather than history: a series of events, each discussed in isolation, with no suggestion of causality and no sense of the whole.

Even as chronicles, *Keeping Faith* is a disappointment. Much of the information is incorrect. For example, Carter claims that when President Sadat of Egypt announced his trip to Jerusalem, he, Carter, "did what I could to get foreign leaders to refrain from criticism until the results of Sadat's visit could be assessed." In reality, for several days the administration deprecated Sadat's initiative since it had undercut the Carter-Vance scheme to reconvene the Geneva conference on the Middle East, complete with Soviet participation.

Again, Carter totally rewrites the history of his disastrous neutron-bomb decision. In his version, the Germans "played footsie" by asking that the U.S. commit itself to production of the weapon while at the same time insisting that at least one other European country agree to accept it before they would announce their own willingness to take the weapon on German soil. So, according to Carter, the United States "deferred production," using the *threat* of production "to induce additional restraints among the Soviets in other arms-control negotiations." In fact, the United States leaned heavily on West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to take the weapon (provided, of course, that another European country did so too); then, when he finally agreed, Carter abruptly decided not to go ahead after all.

Carter also suffers from selective amnesia on the two great scandals of his administration: Lancegate and Billygate. To judge from his account, one would think that Bert Lance, Carter's close friend who was forced to resign as director of the Office of Management and Budget, was singled out by the Washington *Post* for special punishment simply because he was a small-town banker, and that Billy's exertions on behalf of the Libyan government were simply the acts of an as-yet uncured alcoholic. There is no mention that Billy was an intermediary with the Libyans in an attempt to resolve the Iranian hostage crisis, or that Billy met in Tripoli with the likes of Yasir Arafat and George Habash.

ALL these faults aside, *Keeping Faith* is to be esteemed for its candor. The two longest sections of the book deal with Camp David and the Iranian crisis. The first shows Carter at his best: an honest broker, tireless worker, willing to take a real risk against heavy odds. In the light of the achievement represented by Camp David, one can even overlook his scarcely concealed dislike of Menachem Begin, and his general sourness toward Israel.

The Iranian account is quite different, and shows Carter at his very worst. Nowhere is there even a hint that he understands the importance of the fall of the Shah, or the impact of the hostage crisis on America's standing with the rest of the world.

In Carter's eyes, the Iranian crisis was traceable to the "Shah's single-minded pursuit of his own goals," which had created opposition on the part of "the intelligentsia and others who desired more participation in the political processes of Iran." One would hardly know from reading this that what removed the Shah was a reactionary religious movement led by mullahs who wanted to undo any semblance of modern government and return Iran to the Middle Ages.

Carter pretends that the United States spoke unambiguously to the Shah, encouraging him "to hang firm and to count on our backing." Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Shah received constantly conflicting signals from Washington; on the one hand he was being scolded to liberalize his regime and improve "human rights" in Iran, and on the other hand he was reassured that anything he wanted to do was all right wih us.

Carter misdescribes the mission of General Robert Huyser, who was sent to Iran in the final days of the Shah in order to organize a military coup, should one be judged desirable, or to restrain the military, should that be Washington's preference. Out of such confusion, and the chaos in the streets, came the collapse of the monarchy and of the armed forces as well. Carter claims that the Iranian generals came to Ambassador Sullivan with their coup plans, that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance opposed such a measure (true enough), and that Huyser felt confident the army would support the successor regime of Shahpur Bakhtiar. What really happened was that the administration stood by, hoping for an acceptable outcome but unwilling to dirty American hands. Characteristically, the situation in Iran was considered abstractly, without any thought to consequences throughout the Middle East or to the impact on our other allies.

FOR a long time Carter continued to believe that eventually things would work out with Khomeini. (This belief was based on his knowledge that the Ayatollah was a "religious leader.") It also took him a long time to recognize that Khomeini was the only figure who mattered in the revolutionary government of Iran. Throughout the fourteen months that followed the seizure of the American embassy, "negotiations" were carried out through some of the most bizarre channels imaginable, and always on the premise that it was best not to use military power to achieve national objectives. Typically, in the

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end, when military force *was* adopted in an attempt to rescue the hostages, it was insufficient; typically too, when Cyrus Vance—described by Carter as the Cabinet member closest to him and to Rosalyn—resigned over the rescue attempt, he cited as a reason the excess of violence involved.

To be sure, Iran was difficult to understand, especially since no one in the government had read Khomeini's books. The Soviet Union was better studied in Washington, and therefore should not have represented a major mystery, but when Carter left for his SALT summit with Brezhnev in Vienna, he was equipped with some truly disabling advice, courtesy of Averell Harriman: "The system for acquiring and exchanging information within the Soviet Union is very poor, so Brezhnev will not be adequately briefed on some of the American attitudes and concerns."

The show Brezhnev put on in Vienna should have been sufficient to demonstrate that the Russians knew more about Americans than Americans understood about Soviet leaders. At one point Brezhnev put his hand on Carter's shoulder and said, "If we do not succeed, God will not forgive us." This little touch melted Carter, who immediately became solicitous of Brezhnev's health. It remained for Gromyko to give the act away the following day, when he made a sarcastic remark about God's watching over the negotiations. Nevertheless, the glow apparently lasted until the invasion of Afghanistan.

Even after Afghanistan, however—indeed, even today, at his present remove from the White House—Carter cannot bring himself to acknowledge that the vision of the world he carried with him when he entered office was systematically wrong. Nor does he seem to recognize that during his four years *in* office, his own position changed considerably.

GREATER insight into Carter's Presidency is to be had from Hamilton Jordan, who, as White House chief of staff, well understood the shortcomings of his boss. *Crisis* is the story of Jordan's adventures during the last year of the Carter administration, including his experiences as the secret back-channel for contacts with the "government" of Iran following the seizure of the hostages and his activities in the internal politics of the 1982 national campaign.

Crisis is a consistently interesting book even if, in the passages on Iran, Jordan shows himself to be dealing with a world of intrigue and evil that it is beyond his capacities to comprehend. Much of what he says about Iran and the United States is "party-line" liberalism: he picks up a feeling of guilt over a presumed nefarious American past, finds stylish leftist professors to be the most reliable analysts of Iranian events, and naively accepts the likes of Sadeq Ghotbzadeh as interlocutor in Teheran. His book reveals to what level the diplomacy of a great nation can be reduced when it fails to address a crisis seriously. For several months, if Jordan is to be believed, he was our *only* instrument for gaining the release of our hostages, flying the North Atlantic on the Concorde and meeting with two even unlikelier intermediaries than he: a left-wing Parisian lawyer and an exiled Argentine Peronist. It was not until this initiative failed that Carter decided to attempt the rescue mission.

Crisis gives us a richer portrait of the Carter Presidency than does *Keeping Faith*. Unfortunately, the administration that emerges from its pages is every bit as hapless as its critics have imagined.

Inside Jewish History

THE SPRINGS OF JEWISH LIFE. By CHAIM RAPHAEL. *Basic Books. 288 pp. $16.50.*

Reviewed by DAVID SINGER

"OH, FOR A slim, elegant little book about the Jews," cried Chaim Raphael in a 1980 review in COMMENTARY. The book he was longing for has now appeared, and it turns out to be his very own. This is a stroke of good fortune, since Raphael is uniquely equipped to write such a volume on the his-

DAVID SINGER *is co-editor of the* American Jewish Year Book.

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torical experience of the Jewish people, and the book he has produced is a gem.

The Springs of Jewish Life displays to the full the special qualities one has come to associate with Raphael's writings on Jewish history, from *The Walls of Jerusalem,* which deals with the midrashic interpretation of the book of Lamentations, to *A Feast of History,* focusing on the Passover Haggadah, to his many essays in COMMENTARY and elsewhere on various aspects of Jewish life and thought. As a historian, Raphael has always sought to give proper due both to the facts emerging from the sources and to those insights that arise when Jewish history is "experienced internally as myth." "The truth we encounter in myth," he once wrote, "illuminates an area of knowledge that starts and ends in mystery, but carries conviction within it at every stage." *The Springs of Jewish Life,* then, is a book marked both by a high order of scholarship and by deep, passionate feeling. It is also beautifully written.

The book is organized in a strikingly original way. An opening discussion of the elements of Jewish consciousness in the contemporary world is followed immediately by a chapter on the Bible, setting forth the "nature of its appeal and how this was sustained in the social life of the Jews." Then comes an examination of the "long dark period after the exile in Babylon" when the Jews rubbed shoulders with Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, etc., yet emerged with "a religious faith and a social purpose all their own." Raphael next turns to rabbinic Judaism and shows how religious law, Halakhah, came to function as a "secular and humanistic force in Jewish life" while still carrying with it the "holiness and authority of the Bible." An extended discussion of the Jewish-Christian rift—a subject usually passed over quickly in surveys of Jewish history—provides additional insight into the "common faith and purpose" that have bound Jews together over time, as does an examination of the religious beliefs and practices that developed among Jews in the Diaspora. Finally, closing out Raphael's analysis are two chapters on "wanderings and settlings" which provide a "bird's-eye view of the physical disposition of [the] Jews throughout the twenty centuries of the Diaspora" as they have engaged in their "unique dialogue with the rest of the world."

A number of themes clearly emerge from Raphael's presentation. One, underscored time and again, is that Jewish history is determined from within; it has its own inner dynamic, its own "essential generative power." Raphael comes down hard on those historians who treat the Jews as objects of history "operated on by others." But this does not mean that he conceives of Jewish history in a vacuum. On the contrary, in chapter after chapter he takes note of the profound ways in which the Jews have been affected by their historical surroundings. What Raphael rejects is any attempt to make a "datum" out of the Jews—to turn the historical subject into an object.

Closely linked to the theme of the Jew as subject is Raphael's stress on the positive nature of Jewish existence. (He observes at the very start of this book that he was tempted to call it *A Cheerful Look at the Jews.*) Although it is true that a lachrymose view of Jewish history can "easily be justified by the facts," such a view completely misses what is most important in Jewish experience, namely, the "unique kind of fulfillment" it provides. *The Springs of Jewish Life* seeks to convey a sense of that fulfillment, and is much given over to talk of how this or that aspect of Jewish life is "inspiring, intellectually and emotionally."

In his analysis of Jewish history Raphael gives equal weight to life in the Jewish homeland (both ancient and modern) and in the Diaspora. He goes so far as to say that "something miraculous, close to Redemption" happened with the establishment of the state of Israel; but he declines to follow the lead of those Zionist historians who look upon Diaspora living as an abnormality. For him, "Israel and the Diaspora . . . are a joint expression of Jewish identity."

Raphael's inclusive approach to the Israel/Diaspora theme is carried over into his treatment of the issue of particularism vs. universalism. On the one hand, he relishes everything that is special about the Jews, and can wax lyrical in describing the "distinctiveness" of their inherited religious tradition. On the other hand, he looks with complete favor on the Jews' active participation in every general aspect of society and culture, wherever they may have happened to find themselves through the ages. It would be difficult to imagine a more cosmopolitan perspective than Raphael's on the question of the Jewish contribution to world culture:

> [The drive to create] always seems to carry forward, to some extent, the passion generated in early times by a feeling among Jews that Providence has made them "special." It finds new form when they discover that there are things in the world undreamed of in their Jewish background. Emerging, they are captivated by what they see, reach out for points of contact, and gradually, as they find their feet, become an active part of the scene, often with originality and distinction, but always—inevitably—within the context of the host culture. If the record of achievement by Jews, in these terms, is extraordinarily high in many fields, the debt is owed, paradoxically, by the Jews. Without the stimulus of their unique sense of identity, the story would have been thin and poor; yet the ultimate enrichment is not Jewish but a mark of civilization itself.

THE title of Raphael's book is intended in part to echo a verse in Job (38:16): "Hast thou entered in the springs of the sea? Hast thou walked in search of the depth?" Raphael sees in these words a "reproof and a challenge" to the historian who would venture to fathom the mystery of Jewish existence over the ages. Still, the central question concerning Jewish history—"[What] is it that kept the Jews going against all odds, surfacing from tragedy with an inextinguishable sense of courage?"—will not go away, and he does attempt to confront it.

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Raphael's answer, stated in a quiet but confident manner, is that Jewish survival is compounded of two elements: kinship and aspiration. The "affection and fellowship . . . at the core of Jewish life" make for extraordinarily powerful social bonds that are able to stand up to the severest pounding of history. Of equal importance, however, is the fact that in Jewish consciousness, kinship is always linked to a "sense of aspiration"; it "always carries with it memories or echoes of the stirring issues in which kinship first took shape," in biblical times. There is, in short, a "sense of urgency" about Jewishness, and this is the "secret energy" that sustains the Jews' "indomitable will to live."

Raphael would surely admit that his is not necessarily the last word on the subject of Jewish survival. Still, he has provided a significant opening statement on a matter that, quite incredibly, is almost never broached in contemporary Jewish historical writing. For this, as indeed for the whole enterprise of *The Springs of Jewish Life*, we are very much in his debt.

Progressives' Progress

A BETTER WORLD. By WILLIAM L. O'NEILL. *Simon & Schuster. 447 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by ERIC M. BREINDEL

THIS is a welcome book—a careful, systematic study of the struggle between those American intellectuals who supported or apologized for Stalinism and their adversaries, from the period of the New Deal on. William L. O'Neill, the author of an earlier biography of Max Eastman, has produced a formidable work; it stands against an entire literature in which American Communists and their allies have been depicted as wholly innocent victims of a sinister right-wing inquisition abetted by cowardly liberals. The truth, O'Neill convincingly shows, is a much more complicated and interesting affair.

In delineating the map of the Stalinist Left, O'Neill distinguishes scrupulously among actual Communists, fellow-travelers, and the vast body of "progressives" (just as, on the other side, he distinguishes between liberal and right-wing anti-Communists). His primary focus is on fellow-travelers and progressives, the latter grouped in the main around two weekly magazines, the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. Communist-party members and party journals do not interest him particularly, and for good reason: their point of view on major political questions was identical to that of Moscow, and hence a rather less complex matter than some today seem inclined to acknowledge.

Fellow-travelers, reliable adherents of the party line, were represented by newspapers such as the *Compass* (a successor to *PM*) and the *National Guardian*, which professed an "independent radical" perspective, and by prominent individuals like Corliss Lamont (financial "angel" of the *Guardian*, the National Council of Soviet-American Friendship, and similar causes), the journalist Anna Louise Strong, and the playwright Lillian Hellman. In the 1930's and 40's, fellow-travelers denied the crimes of Stalin, apologized for the Nazi-Soviet pact, justified Russia's invasion of Finland, and, in general, refrained from public criticism of Moscow.

In some cases, the distinction between fellow-travelers and actual Communists turned solely on the technical issue of party membership. Paul Robeson, for example, is properly identified as a fellow-traveler, insofar as there is no concrete evidence of his ever having formally joined the CP. In other instances, fellow-travelers appear to have been willing to acknowledge privately—although never publicly—that the Soviets made "mistakes." Anna Louise Strong, troubled by Stalin's show trials and

ERIC M. BREINDEL, *a recent graduate of the Harvard Law School, contributed "The Stalinist Follies" to our October 1982 issue.*

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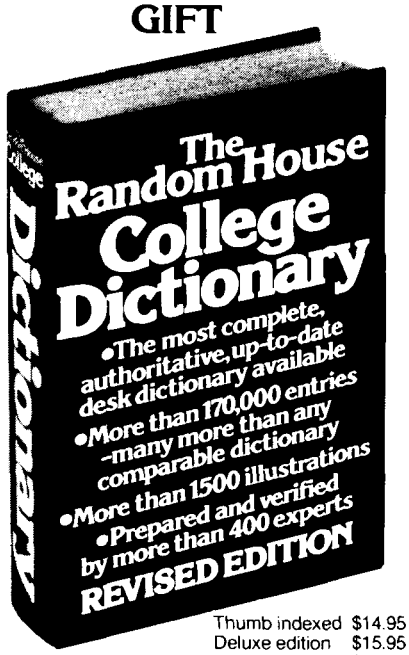
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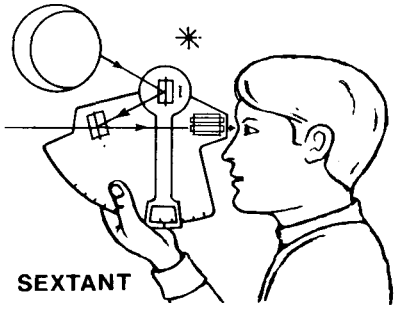

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by the Great Purge, described her inner conflict in a letter to a political compatriot:

> The people I really cared for, on whose side I felt myself to be fighting—they winced so if a single weakness in the USSR were noticed. . . . So I let my audiences pressure me into giving what I knew was a partial picture. I told no lies, but I didn't tell all the truth. . . . And I still think this may be the correct procedure.

This suggests a crucial point for O'Neill's analysis. Anna Louise Strong and other pro-Soviet figures practiced rank intellectual dishonesty, suppressing information—facts they knew to be accurate—about the evils of Soviet Russia. The rationalization that they merely failed to tell "all the truth" scarcely mitigates the seriousness of the offense. Many fellow-travelers, as it happens, were outright liars. Indeed some, still unrepentant, have acknowledged as much. Alexander Werth, who served as Moscow correspondent for the *Nation* (and also some mainstream journals), confessed in 1967 to having deliberately given out false figures about the number of Soviet labor-camp inmates in the 1940's. In a letter to the *New Statesman* Werth defended his action:

> [T]here was a very good reason for this. In 1948, the cold war was at its height, and there were no end of people in Britain, and especially in the U.S., who were advocating a preventive war against Russia; and the "slave labor" (the more the better) was their pet argument. It was the hawks of those days who spoke of 3-30 million "slave laborers" whom it was the Free World's sacred duty to liberate.

This phenomenon of systematic dishonesty, as O'Neill observes, points to an important difference between pro-Soviet intellectuals of all shades and their liberal anti-Communist critics. The former were guilty of knowingly disseminating falsehoods or, in a particularly common practice among progressives and fellow-travelers, suppressing key information. Liberal anti-Communists, whatever other flaws may be attributed to them, simply did not engage in such practices. Thus, contrary to what has sometimes been said of them, the liberal anti-Communists did not stand in the same relation to Senator Joseph McCarthy as the fellow-travelers did to Soviet Communism.

THE two years of the Nazi-Soviet pact, up until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, proved a painful period for both fellow-travelers and progressives—a "nightmare season," in the words of the *Nation*'s Carey McWilliams. Then the "nightmare" gave way to bliss as the two powers became antagonists and the United States entered the war as an ally of the Soviet Union. During World War II and indeed through the Henry Wallace campaign to about 1950, it became difficult to find a distinction between fellow-travelers and progressives. Some fellow-travelers did, from time to time, criticize either Russia or, more often, the American CP. Many progressives, for their part, belonged to Communist fronts. But after the war, when it became inescapably clear that Wallace's Progressive party was controlled by the CP—even Lillian Hellman, while busy denying this publicly, was, by her own testimony, privately (and fruitlessly) begging the Communist leaders to lie low—most progressives reassessed their relation to CP causes and to the party line. Their reassessment was also stimulated by the start of the Korean war, a clear act of Communist aggression.

Still, even before these developments there were significant differences between fellow-travelers and the major progressive institutions. At the height of their enthusiasm for World War II, the "People's War," the *Nation* and the *New Republic* were still not to be confused with the *New Masses*. It was precisely the difference between them which led to the special, calisthenic form in which the editors of the *Nation* and the *New Republic* apologized for those Soviet offenses they could not realistically ignore. Thus, when news reached the West that Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, the two leaders of the Jewish

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labor *Bund* in Poland, had been executed as spies by Moscow (after fleeing to Soviet-controlled territory to escape the Nazis), the *New Republic*'s editorial response was that yes, Erlich and Alter were innocent, and the Soviets ought not to have killed them, but the Allies did not have clean hands, either. What about British outrages in India? What about Sacco and Vanzetti? This ploy, of countering every Soviet misdeed with a supposedly equally heinous Western one, was a staple of progressive polemics.

O'NEILL treats the McCarthy era in a particularly thoughtful manner. He examines the harsh public record—the hearings, the loyalty oaths, the show-business blacklist, and all the rest—but does not scant the prior political activities of most of the victims. Of the Hollywood Ten, O'Neill writes:

> It was Stalinism that inspired HUAC to subpoena the Ten and it was as Stalinists that they refused to testify. It was because of Stalinism that the blacklist was created. The human and constitutional costs of blacklisting were far greater than what they were directed against. Stalinism was an evil all the same, and the occasion for what followed.

This is especially important to appreciate in view of efforts today to picture the events of that period as a morality play. As O'Neill notes:

> That they were penalized unfairly does not absolve show-business Stalinists of political sin. Nor does the failure of their politics make them less bad. Media Stalinists, like other party members, had put the interests of Russia ahead of their own country's, and had defended or rationalized policies that caused the death of millions and the loss of liberty to many more. And those who cooperated with them overlooked this or held that it didn't matter. The conventional judgment on blacklisting is that it ought to be remembered so as to prevent such a thing from happening again. But the causes of blacklisting should not be forgotten either, and for the same reason.

According to a corrupt rendering of history which has enjoyed considerable success since the late 60's, American Stalinism was an insignificant phenomenon, easily excusable in light of the good intentions of its adherents, whereas anti-Communism, particularly of the liberal variety, strengthened McCarthy and the forces of reaction, and helped lead America into Vietnam. This bit of pernicious nonsense has enjoyed the status of received wisdom, despite the fact that it is a thoroughly warped interpretation of the events in question. The refusal of both fellow-travelers and many progressives (the anti-anti-Communists) to recognize domestic Stalinism as the primary cause—the condition *sine qua non*—of the McCarthy reaction is, in O'Neill's words, ". . . rather like a homeowner refusing to assign any responsibility to the fire in his house for the damage done by the firemen."

Aside from disregarding the fire, those who advance this particular interpretation also distort the arguments of the leading liberal anti-Communists. Sidney Hook, Irving Kristol, Diana Trilling, Louis Berg, and others, far from being defenders or allies of McCarthy, declared themselves his adversaries. They did not rationalize his conduct, but attacked liberals and progressives for shortcomings which in their view benefited his demagogic assault on American institutions. Indeed Hook, Kristol, and others, by refusing to grant the Right a monopoly on the issue of anti-Communism, were the true enemies of McCarthyism, while those (like the editors of the *Nation*) who denied that American Stalinism was a problem merely afforded McCarthyism free rein. As for those who kept the party line or who devoted their political energies to the cause of the Soviet Union, and then attempted to pose before HUAC as defenders of American principles, they were not foes of McCarthy at

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One-Round Writer?

MAILER: A BIOGRAPHY. By HILARY MILLS. *Empire Books. 477 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by KENNETH S. LYNN

For forty years the reviewing of new American writing has been dominated by critics who have sought to extend the argument enunciated by Alfred Kazin in *On Native Grounds* (1942): American writers are the victims of their society. Never once has it occurred to these critics that in our time the reverse argument applies: American society is the victim of its writers. The American writer once conducted honest quarrels with his country; now he hurls fantastic accusations that are nothing but projections of his own problems. A case in point is Norman Mailer, as Hilary Mills's biography inadvertently makes clear.

Miss Mills's strong suit as a biographer is her sense of drama. Thus she opens her book with the wild press conference staged by Mailer in the aftermath of his testimony at the trial of Jack Henry Abbott, the convict whom Mailer had helped to get released from prison on the grounds that he was a literary artist of incalculable talent, but who had subsequently pulled a knife on a young waiter in a New York City restaurant and stabbed him to death.

As Mailer confronted the reporters, he looked, says Miss Mills, like a "senior banker." A dark blue, three-piece suit draped his thickening frame. His completely white hair was cut conservatively short. Beside him sat his beautiful sixth wife. "I certainly have the strongest feelings and hopes that Abbott will not get the maximum sentence," Mailer began. "Abbott is a very complex man with great gifts. . . . [He] didn't benefit from this. The only people who have gotten anything out of this whole mess are the ones who are calling for more law and order, and more law and order means moving this country toward a fascist state. . . . I'm willing to gamble with a portion of society to save this man's talent."

At this point the incensed reporters interrupted with a volley of exceedingly tough questions, in the midst of which the beleaguered novelist suddenly assumed another personality. The man who looked like a banker started to shift from foot to foot like a boxer, while the carefully cultivated voice of a Harvard-educated author gave way to "the mean Southern accent he had adopted during World War II, a voice reminiscent of Rod Steiger's sheriff in *In the Heat of the Night*." As in the past, Miss Mills observes, "the emergence of his Southern inflection presaged the explosion of the Mailer temper." He accused a woman reporter of having hate in her eyes. He answered another questioner with paranoid references to "lying headlines" and "scumbag journalism." Finally he yelled, "Fuck off. No more questions."

The novelist's Raskolnikov-like claim that literary artists have the right to get away with murder and the ensuing counterattack on the reporters by his satanic Southern double give the opening of *Mailer* the makings of a Dostoevskyan tale, but a few pages later it becomes clear that Miss Mills does not share even a particle of Dostoevsky's passion to uncover inner life. She completely finesses the questions raised by Mailer's pathological performance at the press conference by gently referring to his behavior as "paradoxical" and to his personality as "complicated." These evasions turn out to be typical of the entire biography. No matter whether Miss Mills is talking about Mailer as a scrawny college student hooked on the muscular Hemingway or as a wealthy celebrity hooked on convict

KENNETH S. LYNN, *who teaches history at Johns Hopkins, is the author of* The Air-Line to Seattle, *to be published in April (University of Chicago Press).*

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chic, her hopped-up, newsmagazine prose lacks any sort of penetrative power. Having botched every opportunity to bring Mailer's motivations into the light, the biographer concludes her book with a bouquet of clichés worthy of a toastmaster at a testimonial dinner. "One thing is certain: Norman Mailer is an individual of enormous imagination, courage, and energy in an age that too often seems devoid of such traits."

Our first chance to make our own exploration of Mailer's motivations occurs in the biography's second chapter, "Young Mailer at Harvard." On his arrival in Cambridge in the fall of 1939 the boy from Brooklyn was only sixteen years old. Nevertheless, he already knew that he wanted to major in aeronautical engineering. It was "a practical choice," Miss Mills explains, "for the only son of a second-generation immigrant family seeking to raise himself a notch above the . . . lower-middle class." English A, the required freshman course in composition, transformed his dreams. Not only did he discover that he loved writing fiction, but he found that he was very good at it. Assigned readings in Hemingway and other modern American writers also broke upon his mind with the force of religious revelation.

In pursuit of his new goal of becoming the Hemingway of his generation, Mailer enrolled in advanced writing classes offered by Theodore Morrison and Robert Hillyer, as well as in the literature courses of such teachers as Harry Levin. Furthermore, he began to submit short stories to the *Harvard Advocate*, and was soon invited to join the magazine's board—an invitation which in turn led to membership in the prestigious Signet Society, the undergraduate literary club. Clinching proof that he had found his true calling came from beyond the university; at the end of his sophomore year, *Story* magazine awarded him first prize for a Hemingwayesque account of three hustlers in a poolroom.

Obsessed by Hemingway's personal legend as well as by his literary achievements, the young man further emulated his idol—or so he thought—by getting drunk in Boston bars and throwing phantom punches at friends. Yet in one highly revealing respect he did not attempt to follow in the older writer's footsteps. From the moment that America entered World War I, the seventeen-year-old Hemingway had been enthralled by the dream of having military adventures. His efforts to enlist were initially thwarted by his father's opposition to the idea, and subsequently by the revelation that his eyesight did not meet army standards. Nevertheless, the first anniversary of America's involvement in the war found the youth en route to the dangerous fighting in northern Italy as an officer in the Red Cross. Eighteen-year-old Norman Mailer responded to America's entrance into World War II in a quite different fashion. He not only carried on with his college work, he did not even bother to accelerate it. Unlike the huge majority of young men who entered Harvard at the same time he did, Mailer was graduated in June 1943, after a normal four years of study.

What permitted him to stay on at Harvard was the fact that as a student of engineering sciences he was deferred from the draft. His biographer asserts that he continued to study engineering "partially to please his mother," who still wanted him to learn something practical. In spite, however, of her use of the word "partially," Miss Mills does not go on to mention any other factor that might help to explain Mailer's curious decision not to switch out of engineering into English—which in the light of his burgeoning literary ambitions it would have been logical for him to do. In any case, he took no steps to persuade his draft board to alter his classification.

Following his Harvard graduation, the would-be Hemingway of his generation laid plans for writing a novel about World War II—but still made no active effort to become involved in it. On the contrary, he passively accepted the discovery that his draft board had apparently misplaced his file. In the fall of 1943, the civilian author finished revising a novel about a mental hospital and tried to peddle it to a publisher in

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New York. In January 1944, he celebrated his twenty-first birthday in Brooklyn. A month later, he got married in Yonkers. Toward the end of March, he finally was inducted into the army, but did not go overseas until January 1945, when at his request he was sent to the Pacific. Arriving in the Philippines, he was given a desk job with the 112th Armored Cavalry Regiment, first as a typist, later as an interpreter of aerial photographs. In the evenings he read Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, interspersed with doses of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

Realizing that somewhat rawer experiences would have to go into the making of his war novel, he then asked to be reassigned as a rifleman in an intelligence and reconnaissance unit. By the time the reassignment came through, however, the back of the Japanese military and naval strength in the Philippines had been decisively broken. Consequently, the action he saw bore no comparison to the ricocheting hell to which Hemingway had exposed himself in the Hurtgen Forest the previous autumn, or to the bombardments along the Piave in 1918 which had almost cost him his life. Mailer himself has admitted that he only took part in "a couple of firefights and skirmishes," and his first wife would later tell Miss Mills an even less impressive story: "He took a few potshots, but I don't remember worrying every day that Norman would get killed. It wasn't that kind of fighting any more."

He finished out his military service baking desserts in the army of occupation in Japan, and returned to civilian life on May 2, 1946. By June, he and his wife were installed in a bungalow on Cape Cod, where he wrote the opening pages of *The Naked and the Dead*. The 721-page novel was completed in a fourteen-month spasm of furious work.

Miss Mills characterizes *The Naked and the Dead* as "an anti-war novel," as did its original reviewers in 1948, many of whom also likened it to the disillusioned war fiction of the writer whom Mailer admired above all others. The comparison, however, could not be more misleading. The anti-war novels of Hemingway and Mailer are as dissimilar as the combat experiences of the two authors. *A Farewell to Arms* voices in its most memorable passage a bitter disenchantment with the moralistic rhetoric of Woodrow Wilson, whereas *The Naked and the Dead* slavishly reflects the moralistic rhetoric of an even more misguided politician, Henry Agard Wallace.

Encouraged by the militantly radical girlfriend who became his first wife, Mailer had gradually developed a considerable interest in current events. By 1946, he knew where he stood on a whole range of issues, including and especially Soviet-American relations, which worried him very much. "The whole year that Norman was writing *The Naked and the Dead* was a scary year," his first wife recalls. "We were afraid war was going to break out between Russia and the U. S. We wanted better relations with Russia. We wanted to stop the cold war." Mailer tried to stop it in two ways. First, he joined Wallace's Progressive Citizens of America, an organization devoted to arranging rallies at which Wallace and other fellow-travelers berated Harry Truman as a warmonger, decried the intervention of the U. S. in areas that the Soviet Union aspired to control, and conjured up visions of eternal peace based on Soviet-American friendship. Second, Mailer did everything he could think of in the novel he was writing to discredit both the government and the people of his native land, so as to make it plausible to think of America as the aggressor in world affairs. (Mailer supported himself while writing this vehemently anti-American book by drawing on the unemployment benefits of the G.I. Bill of Rights. That he was biting the hand that fed him was a thought that apparently did not occur to him.)

The Naked and the Dead not only does not praise the United States for its victory over fascism, it argues that fascism is on the verge of victory inside the United States. The same looming threat of homegrown Hitlerism that Mailer would invoke in the course of demanding forgiveness for Jack Henry Abbott was first introduced by him in *The Naked and the Dead*, in conversations between the Douglas MacArthur-like General Cummings and his Harvard-educated aide, Lieutenant Hearn. Not even the most irresponsible of the peacenik speeches that Henry Wallace delivered in 1946 and 1947 went further than Mailer does in the Cummings-Hearn conversations to make American resistance to Soviet imperialism look like a sinister fascist plot:

> "The concept of fascism [says Cummings] merely started in the wrong country. . . . America is going to absorb [Germany's] dream, it's in the business of doing it now. . . ."
>
> "We've become destiny, eh?" Hearn said.
>
> "Precisely. . . . After the war our foreign policy is going to be more naked, far less hypocritical than it has ever been. We're no longer going to cover our eyes with our left hand while our right is extending an imperialist paw."

The tarring of America with the brush of fascism is established dramatically as well as philosophically, in scenes throughout the book which depict American servicemen as drunken, anti-Semitic bully boys. Ruminating on the loutish behavior of the other members of his platoon, the young Jewish soldier Goldstein concludes, "They were just a bunch of anti-Semiten. . . . That was all the goyim knew, to run around with loose women, and get drunk like pigs. . . . It's hard to remember all the fine ideals. Sometimes even with the Jews in Europe I don't know why we're fighting." Inasmuch as the novelist wants Goldstein's uncertainty as to why any sensitive person would wish to fight for America to become the reader's uncertainty as well, he eventually reinforces the Jewish soldier's ruminations with a flashback on the early life and sordid times of a soldier from Boston named Gallagher, in which we learn virtually nothing about the city except that it is populated with anti-Semites. In Gallagher's Boston, "the synagogues and cemeteries are fouled with language and symbol. 'The fuggin kikes' and the cross or swastika. 'I am distressed to hear of it,' says Governor Curley, Saltonstall, Tobin." As for Gallagher himself,

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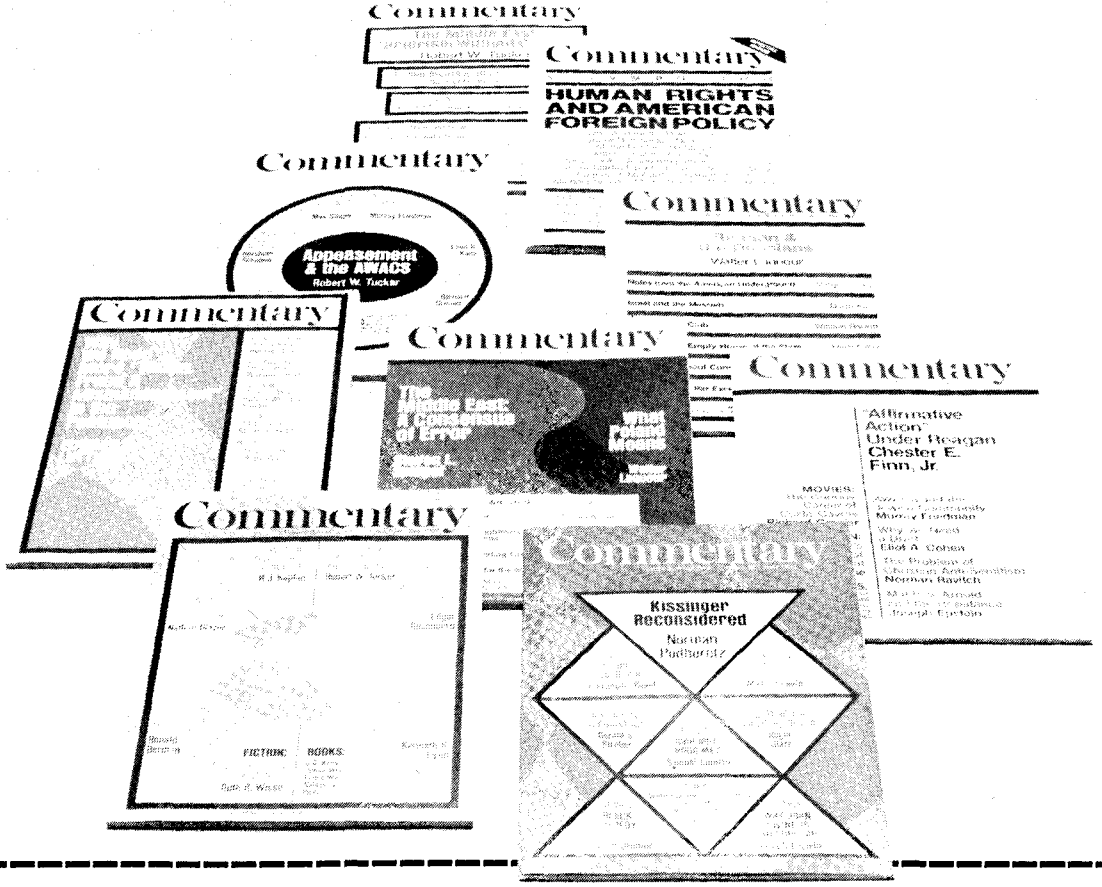

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he is devoted neither to the Catholic church nor to the Democratic party nor to any other typical institution of Boston Irish life; he is a member, rather, of a group called the Christian Union. ("We gotta start mobilizing and get ready, the International Jews is tryin' to get us to war, an' we gotta get them first, . . . they take all the jobs. . . .")

Even more unforgivable than Gallagher's lack of historical representativeness, however, is his failure to interest us as a person. For all his xenophobic fury, Mailer's Boston Irishman never comes alive; instead of convincing us that he is a flesh-and-blood human being, Gallagher merely makes it clear that his creator once read James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan*. Like the young John Dos Passos before him, whose World War I novel *Three Soldiers* was the model for the multiethnic portrayals in *The Naked and the Dead*, the young Mailer had an imaginative reach that far exceeded his grasp—and it takes a very firm grasp indeed, as Henry James once remarked, to make American life yield up its secrets. The flashbacks in *The Naked and the Dead* range far and wide over the American landscape, but there is a deadly sameness about them which testifies to how little the author knew about the nation he sought to vilify.

THE only soldier who stands out from the crowd, the only character in the novel whose life story compels belief, is Sam Croft, the sergeant from west Texas. Although Croft is the most diabolical incarnation of Mailer's vision of American fascism, he is no mere cartoon figure, drawn to illustrate a thesis. Croft, we feel sure, is a man whom Mailer had met. Croft, in fact, is a satanic Southern version of Mailer himself. So intensely did Mailer identify with his alter ego—perhaps alter id is the term I am looking for—that he endowed him with his own features. A thin, blue-eyed young man of medium height, Mailer was distinguished, in his biographer's words, by a "narrow triangular face." Nothing better exemplifies Miss Mills's lack of psychological concentration than her failure to realize that those very words are contained in Mailer's description of Croft: "A lean man of medium height but he held himself so erectly he appeared tall. His narrow triangular face was utterly without expression. There seemed nothing wasted in his hard small jaw, gaunt firm cheeks and straight short nose. His gelid eyes were very blue. . . ." If we allow for a certain amount of romanticization, Sam Croft is Norman Mailer to the life. And if the so-called "mean Southern accent" that Mailer adopted during World War II was in fact an approximation of a west Texas twang, then Croft is a phonographic as well as photographic reproduction of his creator.

In the early 1950's, Hemingway remarked to his son Gregory that "Mailer's a psycho, but the psycho part is the most interesting thing about him. Chances are he won't be able to throw another fit like *The Naked and the Dead*. But if he does, I better watch out. There'll be another Dostoevsky to contend with, and no one lasted more than three rounds with Mr. Dostoevsky." Without much question, the "fit" that Hemingway was talking about was Mailer's creation of Croft. For in setting forth the savage incidents of the sergeant's life—his gratuitous murder of a striker in a labor dispute, his nonstop love-making with his hot-pants wife ("Crack . . . that . . . WHIP!"), his bouts of drunkenness, his discovery that he likes to beat the women he sleeps with, his smoldering, endless hatred of "EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF," his nurturing over the years of "a crude unformed vision" which finally takes shape in the South Pacific in the form of arranging for Lieutenant Hearn's death at the hands of the Japanese and then of compelling Hearn's men, who are now under his command, to make a meaningless assault on a mountain whose name means nothingness solely for the purpose of satisfying his lust for power—in setting forth these savage things Mailer reaches and sustains such a high level of emotional urgency that he simply had to be tapping the "psycho part" of his own soul. The great irony of *The Naked and the Dead* is that Mailer lent credibility to his accusation that the spirit of fascism was at work in America only when he offered his own double as proof.

THE literary genius that Mailer first displayed in his characterization of Croft has never deserted him. From "The Time of Her Time" to *The Executioner's Song*, his later work is studded with unforgettable scenes of sex and violence, with astonishing metaphors, with brilliant musings on the realms of darkness underlying the American dream's bright surface. Yet Hemingway was right when he doubted that Mailer would go on from *The Naked and the Dead* to become the American Dostoevsky. For the author of *The Naked and the Dead*, unlike the author of *Crime and Punishment*, was not in the least appalled to discover a dualism in his nature, and therefore had no interest in resolving it. Instead of trying to overcome the obsessions that haunted him, Mailer settled for acting them out. The splendor of Dostoevsky's career arose out of his belief that men must atone for their sins and that atonement can only be achieved through suffering. The horror of Mailer's career is defined by his conviction that crimes should be forgiven without punishment. His accounts of a cold-blooded killer named Gary Gilmore and (in *The Armies of the Night*) of a drunken opponent of the Vietnam war named Norman Mailer may have brought him megabucks and book awards but that is not because they possess a Dostoevskyan depth of understanding, it is because their praise of pathological behavior has fitted the temper of a self-pitying time. In Hemingway's prize-ring parlance, the author of *The Naked and the Dead* has proved to be a one-round fighter.

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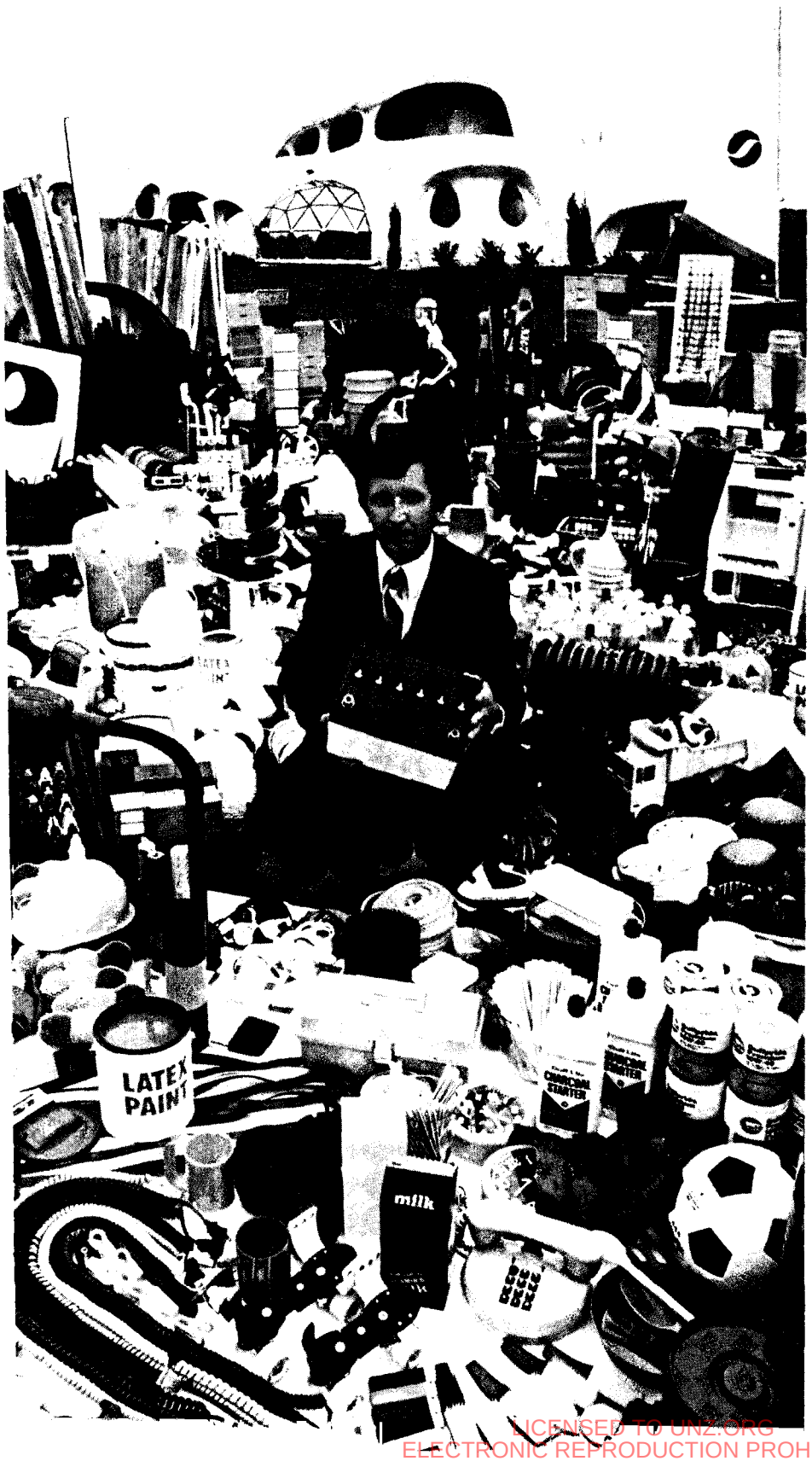

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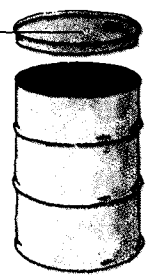

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